New Baldassare Book: A California State of Mind

California JOURNAL

SEPTEMBER 2002
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Timed out

Like 100,000 other Californians, the welfare check for this mother of four is about to stop. Forever.

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california JOURNAL

September 2002
Volume XXXIII, Number 9

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Still Experimenting

The public has lost attention. Even the politicians have put it on the backburner. But despite its successes, the welfare experiment that America launched with great trepidation and fanfare in 1996 is still far from over. Within a few months, about 100,000 Californians will be cut from welfare for the rest of their lives. And from now on, more will be cut every month. Eventually, California will have a population the size of a decent city that is beyond the safety net. None of the experts know what that means. The targeted populations are concentrated in poor neighborhoods, so thousands of dollars will be pulled from small communities. The population also is filled with elderly refugees and hardship cases that will never find their way into the workforce. This issue of *California Journal* looks to the horizon at some unresolved questions that are certain to demand more attention in the near future.

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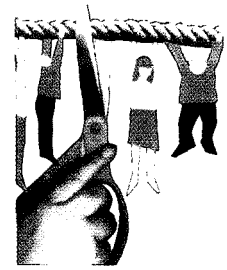

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Cover: Debra Buck, mother of four, will lose her welfare benefits in January. See welfare profiles, page 14.

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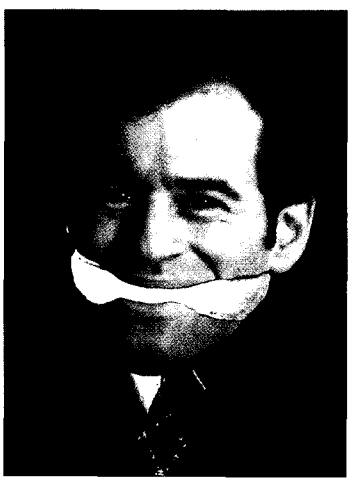
umbrage

Unz sighting. Remember Ron Unz? He's the millionaire from Silicon Valley who, in 1998, sponsored Proposition 227 — the initiative that ended bilingual education in California. That was a heady time for the gadfly Republican, who as a political unknown had challenged Pete Wilson in the 1994 GOP primary for governor. By mid-1999, *The New Republic* had featured Unz on its cover with the headline, "This Man Controls California," calling him a "quirky political genuis." Well, it's been rough on Mr. Quirky ever since. After failing to pass a campaign-finance reform initiative in March 2000 (Proposition 25), Unz again took up the anti-bilingual crusade and rode off to champion it in other states. Apparently these days, California's loss is Massachusetts' gain, because Unz now is tilting at Bay State windmills. And not doing very well for himself, either. According to the *Boston Herald*, Unz earned the wrath of just about everybody — including his own allies — by referring to U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige as "dim witted," both in an e-mail and in an interview with the paper. Not only that, Unz, whose English for Children initiative is on the November ballot, also said that President George Bush had appointed Paige, who is black, "only so [the president] could fill affirmative action quotas in his Cabinet." As if those comments weren't enough, Unz also told the *Herald* that blacks themselves have no credibility to discuss bilingual education because they "have no direct connection ... with language acquisition." Unz's remarks earned an immediate rebuke from the White House. More significant, they also earned a slap on the wrist from the chairman of Unz's own initiative drive, who went to some lengths to distance the campaign from its chief benefactor. Oh, yes. Unz insists that he *is* qualified to discuss bilingual education because his mother spoke only Yiddish. Whatever.



Gone for gold. Nearly every association has an annual confab where the minions gather to discuss the heady issues that face the organization. Or play golf. Depending on the size of the group, an annual conference can mean revenue for a city hosting the event, and in a sour economic climate, any extra cash is welcome. Unfortunately for California locales, the California Rehabilitation Association, headquartered in Sacramento, is holding its 2002 annual meeting later this month in, uh, Las Vegas.

Kudos. The Association of Capitol Reporters and Editors (ACRE) recently held its annual meeting in Washington, D.C., and handed out awards for excellence in covering state government. Among the winners: Bob Garrett of the *Riverside Press Enterprise*, who pulled in the top award for beat reporting for newspapers with circulation over 75,000. Garrett was the only California journalist to win an award.

Quote of the month. Comes from Harry Truman and is cited in a new book, "Harry Truman and Civil Rights" by Michael R. Gardner: "I wonder how far Moses would have gone if he'd taken a poll in Egypt?," Truman once wrote in a memo. "What would Jesus Christ have preached if he'd taken a poll in Israel? Where would the Reformation have gone if Martin Luther had taken a poll? It isn't polls or public opinion of the moment that counts. It is right and wrong and leadership — men with fortitude, honesty and a belief in the right that makes epochs in the history of the world."

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CALIFORNIA JOURNAL is a monthly, non-partisan, non-ideological analysis of California government and politics established in 1970. The Journal is available on-line through StateNet, Nexis/Lexis and Westlaw. It is indexed in Public Affairs Information Service, New York Times Information Bank, Sage Urban Studies Abstracts and Urban Affairs Abstracts. California Journal (ISSN 0008-1205) is published monthly. Subscription rates: Libraries and Government Agencies, $59.00; Corporations and Associations, $95.00; Special Individual rate, $43.00. Address all inquiries to California Journal, 2101 K Street, Sacramento, CA 95816. Telephone (916) 444-2840.

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Periodicals postage paid at Sacramento. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to CALIFORNIA JOURNAL, 2101 K Street, Sacramento, CA 95816.

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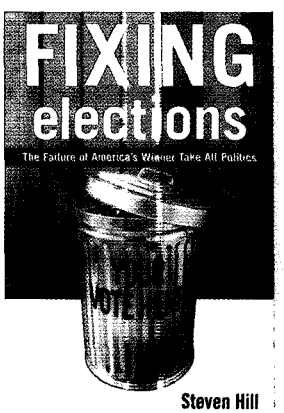
Excerpts:

From the bookshelf

Fixing Elections
The Failure of America's Winner Take All Politics
By Steven Hill
Routledge Press

It's become an axiomatic fallout of the 2000 presidential election that voting machines — not the underlying political system — are to blame for the fiasco that resulted in over five weeks passing before a nation knew who would become its next president. Sure, many came away aghast that Al Gore won the popular vote but lost the election due to the idiosyncrasies of the Electoral College. But, according to Steven Hill in Fixing Elections, the 2000 election was simply one of the many examples of a winner-take-all political system gone awry. Hill not only calls into question the Electoral College, but the makeup of the U.S. Senate, where, he argues, two senators per state has resulted in disproportionate power for low-population states. Rather, in Hill's estimation, a new system of proportional representation must be devised, one which better reflects the racial, economic and political diversity of the country both in the U.S. Senate and presidential elections. "We are witnessing a wholesale and widespread under development of the American voter, contributing to the atrophy of the rational political consciousness," says Hill.



Welfare Watch:

Bureaucracy on the move

Time limits may be forcing scores of welfare recipients off the rolls, but for the 31,000 Alameda County residents who still receive welfare and food stamps, it's the dawn of another new era. No longer will public assistance checks arrive by mail only to require cashing at outlets that charge outlandish fees. No longer will food stamp recipients fumble at cash registers sorting through government-issued coupons to pay for groceries. Monthly payments for both began arriving in August via automatic deposit into accounts accessed with personal debit cards. You would think that, once again, California moves to the head of the class for ingenuity on this one. Not so; 42 states already use debit cards for welfare payments. Yolo County joined Alameda County in the pilot run. Contra Costa, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, Solano and Sonoma counties will follow suit in December. Coming soon thereafter: the remainder of the state, if the pilot program works according to plan.

Quotables.....

"I just don't remember what I was thinking."
— Republican gubernatorial nominee Bill Simon, in sworn testimony last May, explaining his role in a business deal that a jury found to be fraudulent in July.

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The choice, or lack thereof

by A.G. Block

California's first gubernatorial election of the 21st century is an all-time clunker in which the two main candidates have demonstrated proficiency only in the art of the schoolyard taunt. Most of this muck has come in the form of faxes to the press and at such a consistently low depth that you need a pressurized submersible to read them. If the fax rant be true, the two main contenders are:

A) an incompetent and corrupt incumbent cockroach whose ethical core long ago burned to a cinder; whose brain was surgically replaced with money-management software; whose bungling is directly responsible for the energy crunch, budget deficit, collapse of the stock market, demise of Amtrak and global warming; and who has transformed the governor's office into an extortion racket that Al Capone would think excessive;

and,

B) an inexperienced reptile who bilked the government out of billions in tax dollars, lied about his experience as a prosecutor, flushed a savings-and-loan down the toilet and therefore vaporized the retirement security of 10,000 grandmas, siphoned off millions of dollars meant to support widows and orphans through a charity, refused to share even the most basic information about his tax returns, couldn't remember writing off more than $1 million in business losses, partnered with a convicted drug dealer and practiced management skills that resulted in a $78 million fraud judgment.

That's the choice: Gray Davis, the cockroach, or Bill Simon, the reptile.

As the campaign heats up, the two sides will move this brawl from reporters' fax machines to the public airwaves, and what this will do to further erode confidence in government is anyone's guess. After a few months of negative campaigning, with neither candidate expressing a meaningful vision for California, most of us will be convinced that the winner is a menace to society.

And frankly, we'll be close to the mark. Campaign bombast aside, it is impossible to paste a smiley face on the choice facing voters, in large measure because glimmers of truth — on both sides — lay beneath the negative spin. Simply put, this is a dreadful choice for governor.

Davis, who may eclipse Alan Cranston and Barbara Boxer as the luckiest politician in state history, has earned a one-way ticket to oblivion. He has provided little leadership in resolving monster problems such as the financing of state government, preferring to let inexperienced and polarized lawmakers wallow around in a budget morass for more than three months. And when faced with a severe energy crisis a few years ago, he raised "shirking responsibility" to an art form by repeating *ad nauseam* that the problem wasn't his. Most significant, his overly aggressive and ham-handed fund raising promotes the appearance — if not the reality — of a corrupt government for sale. Democrats nominated him because no Democratic politician had the gumption to take him on in the primary.

Davis and Simon are not the right candidates for California, and neither one deserves a vote.

Republicans, on the other hand, saddled voters with Bill Simon. In the last 100 years in California, Simon ranks — with perhaps Upton Sinclair — as one of the least qualified major party candidates to seek the governorship. Simon has no experience. Period. Heading an investment firm that trafficked on the name and fortune of one's father is not a portfolio for running a state as large, complex and diverse as California. Never mind that he seems clueless about important issues and the give-and-take of politics; he doesn't even seem to understand the simple gestures that must be taken when asking for public trust — such as releasing tax returns. That was not, as he tried to paint it, an issue of privacy; it was an issue of faith. The much publicized fraud judgment against Simon's company is not even relevant; he was unqualified before that judgment.

So, here we are.

Davis and Simon.

Davis and Simon are not the right candidates for California, and neither one deserves a vote. People are deeply concerned these days with the integrity and honesty of their institutions, their faith shaken by scandal and corruption affecting both government and American capitalism. At a time when voters crave ethical leaders, we are forced to choose between a candidate who strong-arms money out of people who do business with his administration and another who cannot remember a $1.2 million tax write-off.

Good grief. Where is George Deukmejian when we really need him?

A.G. Block is executive editor of California Journal. *Comments on this column may be sent to* **edit@statenet.com.**

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fallout

One year ago this month, Americans awoke to the greatest criminal disaster in U.S. history — four jet planes enroute to California were hijacked and used as weapons to bring down two towering symbols of human engineering and enterprise and cause massive destruction to the nation's seat of military power. Starting in January, *California Journal* set out to give a feel and flavor of the social, economic and governmental changes that would alter our state. At once, we knew things would never be the same. Today, many of our routines have returned to normal. But we have also accepted a new level of fear and security. Scanning the newspapers around the state on the eve of the one-year anniversary, here's a picture of what's dominating the news in the aftermath of September 11.

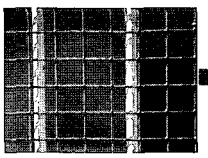
"We are a nation at war. We want to make sure [San Francisco] is as safe as humanly possible."

San Francisco Police Chief Earl Sanders, announcing new S.O.S. bureau to combat terrorism

Scared New World

Ring around the airport

LAX to install eight miles of higher fencing around its perimeter



Travel blues

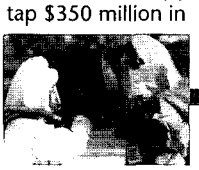
Air travel hits six-year low at LAX and dips 17% for 2002 alone

Anti-terrorism squad

S.F. Police Chief Earl Sanders creates S.O.S. bureau to guard city against terrorist attacks

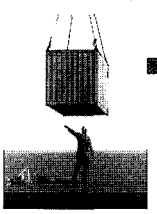
Training first responders

State Sen. Bruce McPherson (R) sponsors bill to tap $350 million in federal funds to train public safety "first responders" in terrorism preparedness



Bombs away

The Port of Long Beach begins using radiation-detecting trucks to scan cargo containers for bombs; inspectors also wear pagers to detect radiation



Airport closes

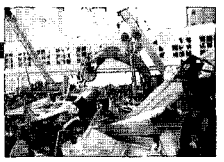
Oakland Airport shuts down for an hour in July after a woman innocently walks into the passenger-only area

High-tech scanning

San Francisco, San Jose and Oakland airports gear up for the installation of high-tech baggage scanners and recruitment of passenger-screening personnel

Steel memorial

Retired Stockton businessman foots bill to ship and fabricate six steel remnants from the World Trade Center into a memorial for the California State Fair in Sacramento

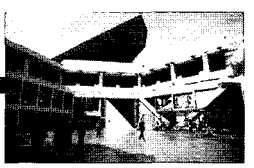


Historic compromise

National Park Service and the U.S. General Services Admin. sponsor July conference in San Francisco to discuss how new security measures will impact historic buildings and urban landscape

Terrorism and teaching

San Francisco State University sponsors July seminar for middle and high school teachers, billed as "Understanding the World After September 11"

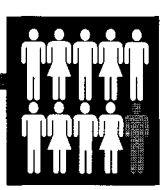


Bridge patrol

Security doubles on Golden Gate Bridge after video by three suspected al-Quaida members was found with footage of the bridge, Disneyland and Universal Studios

Lack of confidence

Field Poll shows nine in 10 Californians believe another terrorist attack is likely and more than a third lack confidence in government anti-terrorism efforts



Air time for remembering

ABC to commemorate Sept. 11 with full day of memorial programs; NBC and CBS expected to follow suit

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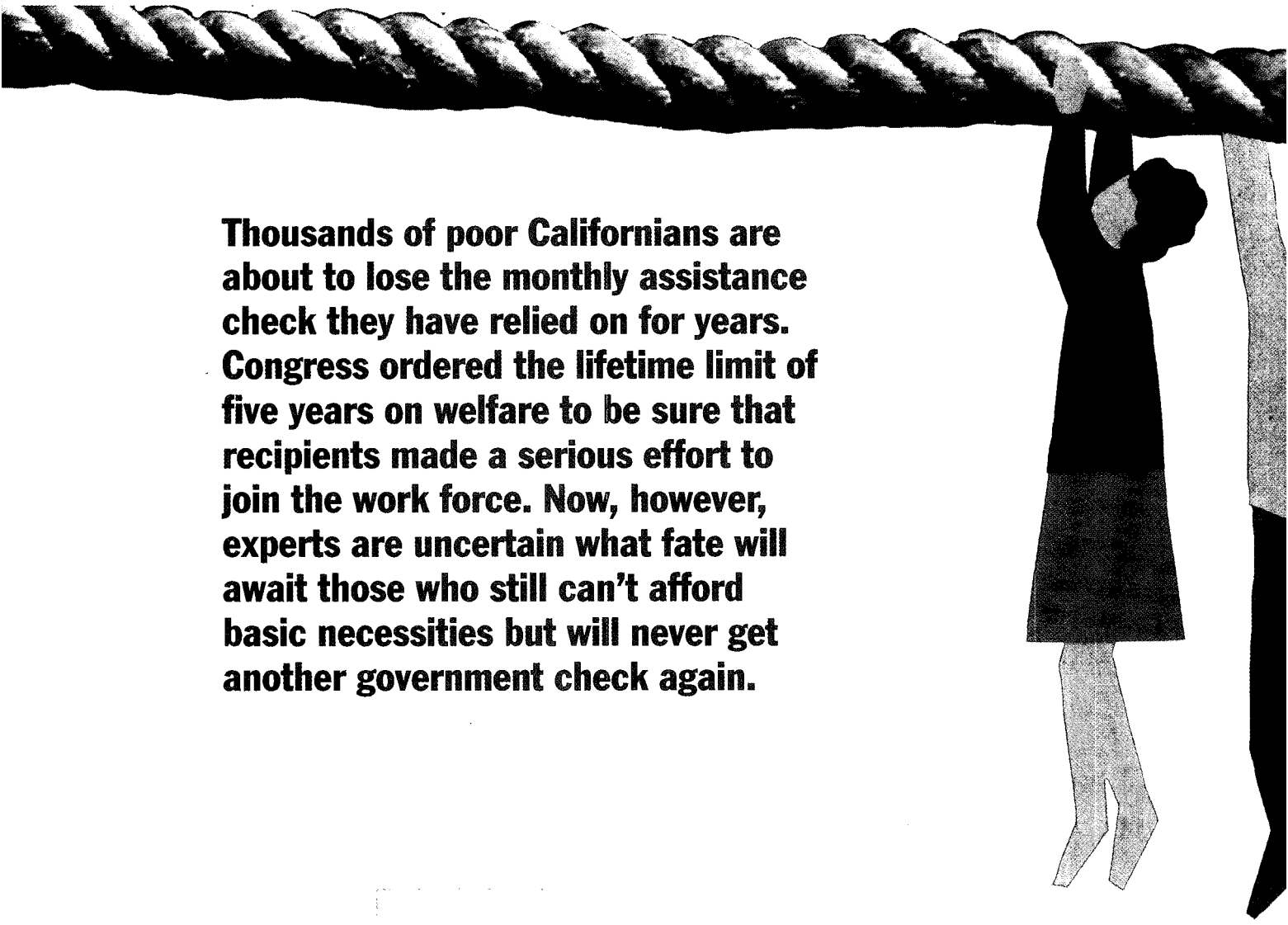
Cut Loose



Thousands of poor Californians are about to lose the monthly assistance check they have relied on for years. Congress ordered the lifetime limit of five years on welfare to be sure that recipients made a serious effort to join the work force. Now, however, experts are uncertain what fate will await those who still can't afford basic necessities but will never get another government check again.

By Karen de Sa

The end of government help is fast approaching for more than 100,000 impoverished California parents who will exhaust their lifetime allowance of welfare benefits by year's end.

It's a population that has already managed to meet all of the new requirements that the state's 1998 welfare overhaul demanded of those who receive public assistance. Today, many are employed, but not in a job that pays enough to make ends meet without welfare.

On January 1, however, California will launch the second and harsher phase of its welfare experiment as those who have received five years of cumulative cash benefits will be moved permanently beyond government charity.

The first to hit the federally required time limit are a mixed group, including a concentrated population in Los Angeles and a large percentage of Asian refugees who have not mastered the language skills needed to hoist their careers from restaurant kitchens, retail shops and assembly plants into more lucrative fields. A good number are married, defying the stereotype of a single mom on the dole.

Twenty percent of the welfare population can be exempted from time

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limits due to hardships, according to the federal law. Still, experts say many of the time-limited population suffer from substance abuse, mental illness or the simple inability to make it on their own. In December, they'll cash their last welfare checks. And California, in turn, will join 37 other states already shedding people permanently from the rolls.

Social researchers will be watching the historic moment closely. The welfare time limit was intended as a threatening hammer to motivate recipients into the work force. But experts are still uncertain about what will happen to those who are cut off — whether they'll manage in other ways or whether the change could trigger a downward spiral that sends more parents and children into homelessness and desperation.

These are the first true tests of the nation's 1996 welfare

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overhaul that transformed the lifetime guarantee of public assistance into a temporary boost. Signed into law by former Democratic President Bill Clinton and embraced by Republicans, the new rules aimed to drive poor families away from government dependency. They afforded new opportunities for job training and child care but required work or preparation for work in exchange for cash aid. Strict sanctions hit those failing to comply.

Welfare sea change

For the first time, states were allowed to weave their own social safety nets to fit local needs. So in 1997, California legislators instituted CalWORKS, the California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids program, and a cultural change unfolded in welfare offices up and down the state. Recipients came to be called "clients" and their eligibility workers were called "employment specialists." They signed a contract agreeing that the deal would last only five years.

Meanwhile, a booming economy and the constant prods of social workers resulted in plunging caseloads nationwide. If declining cases are viewed as the "success" of welfare reform then California is a model state. The rolls here decreased from an average of 903,000 households between 1995 and 1996, to 488,000 in March of this year. Although caseloads rose slightly after last year's recession, they have leveled off in recent months.

Now, as many as 114,000 parents face a January 2003 cutoff, according to statewide estimates from the California Department of Social Services. That number will grow by 10,000 to 15,000 people per month for several months. Some researchers predict a smaller population will be cut off initially. But officials agree the estimates are imprecise and long-term projections are not yet available.

In these households, welfare grants will be reduced by an average of $131 for each adult in a family. Yet compared to most other states, California's welfare program is a compassionate one. Children continue to receive benefits even when their parents "time out." In 23 states, whole families are cut off from welfare when time limits hit. Seven states have time limits even shorter than 60 months according to a review by the Urban Institute, an independent think tank.

California's generous program means that welfare families will continue to receive cash assistance even after the time limit. They also remain eligible for Medi-Cal benefits and child-care assistance, as well as food stamps. Still, particularly in smaller families, the reduction is a significant impact for households that already live on the edge.

It could also become a major cost to the state, which is projecting budget deficits for years to come. Federal funds are available for welfare grants up until the five-year limit. Afterward, the state will be on its own to continue the payments for children.

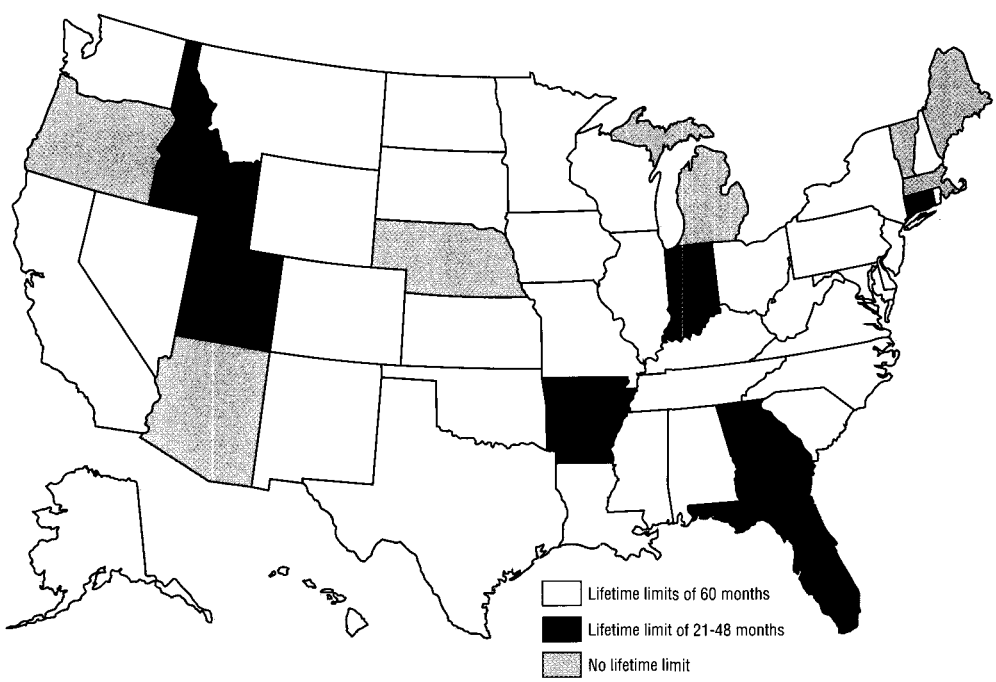
Changing the rules

When California legislators crafted CalWORKS, the program was called "PBTR" or "playing by the rules." Legislators on both sides of the aisle agreed that children should not suffer for their parents' shortcomings in the work world. Yet some are already rethinking that policy, indicating that when CalWORKS is revisited in the Legislature next year, harsher rules may be considered.

State Senator Ray Haynes, a Riverside Republican who sits on the Health and Human Services Committee, argues

Lifetime limits

Seven states impose shorter lifetime limits than the federal five-year cap. Another seven essentially have no time limit since the state provides benefits after federal money runs out. California is one of just four states, including Indiana, Maryland and Rhode Island, that terminate benefits for adults after five years but continue funding benefits for children.



Source: Urban Institute, 2002

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that it's a fallacy to "cut" adults from welfare benefits when they still receive checks for their children. Haynes said California should cut whole families off welfare at 60 months in order to effectively get the work-or-else message across.

"We've never enforced time limits, and the evidence proves it," he said, referring to the state's 114,000 parents facing time limits. "Until we get serious about it, they're not going to get serious about it."

But Bruce Wagstaff, the state's top welfare-to-work director, said he is not disappointed that 18 percent of CalWORKS recipients won't make it off cash aid in five years because far more of its clients have stayed in the job market.

"I would not say they have failed the welfare test," he said, "because they have hit the lifetime limit working."

California's program is unique in other ways as well. Working poor parents are allowed to combine welfare cash grants with wages, a policy that rewards work and recognizes that the high cost of living here means fast food and nursing home jobs don't provide enough to support a family.

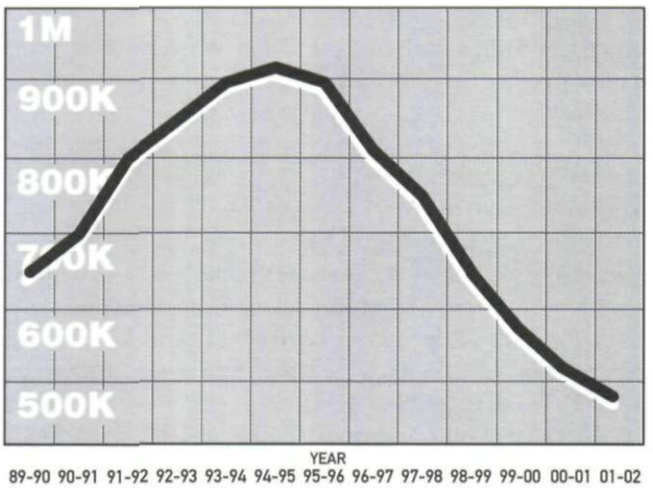
But the welfare clock keeps ticking, even for the employed. And a glimpse of those timing out is yet another example of California's uniqueness. Statewide, 48 percent of long-term recipients held onto their jobs through the economy's recent plunge and the aftereffects of the September 11 attacks that took a toll on airports and related businesses. In some counties, more than three-fourths now work.

And while President George Bush has pushed for new welfare changes that include linking benefits to marriage-promotion programs, many Californians unable to get off the government dole in five years are not sole providers. The state reports that 28 percent of adults facing welfare time limits are married and living with their spouses.

Significant numbers are refugees from Southeast Asia and Eastern Europe; more than one-third struggle with the English language. Their families tend to be older and larger, and their reliance on aid more entrenched than the typical adult on welfare, who moves on and off the rolls

California's caseload

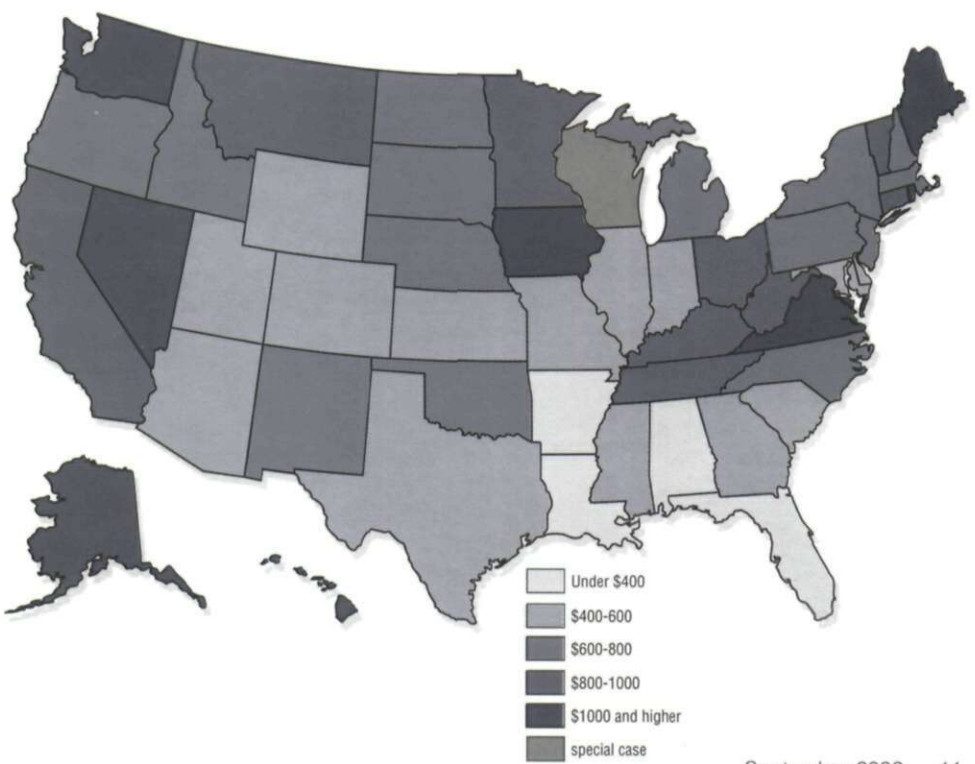
The number of welfare families in California has decreased sharply since 1995 when nearly 1 million homes received welfare benefits. Today fewer than half a million families depend on welfare checks.



Source: California Department of Finance, 2001

Outside income

States vary widely in the amount of outside income welfare recipients may earn and still qualify for cash welfare benefits. In 2000, the amounts ranged from a low of $205 per month allowable income in Alabama to a high of $1,641 in Hawaii.



Source: Urban Institute, 2002

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briefly between jobs.

For slightly more than half of the adults whose five-year clock began ticking in January 1998, there are still greater challenges: mental illness, domestic violence, addictions and lives plagued by childhood sexual and physical abuse.

Trying times ahead

Wagstaff said the goal now is to shift these families into other, nongovernmental supports. Experts say it's still too soon to say how the post-welfare families will fare. The Washington, D.C.-based Center on Budget and Policy Priorities has found that time limits cause food shortages and increased difficulty meeting basic needs in states such as Ohio, Massachusetts, Utah and the Carolinas.

John Cullen, president of the County Welfare Directors Association of California, predicts similar hardships will be seen here. An average family of three, for instance, will have their monthly grant cut from $430 to $300. They remain eligible for food stamps and health coverage through Medi-Cal. But within a year, they will lose child-care benefits as well as additional offerings of the CalWORKS program such as substance-abuse treatment and training to upgrade job skills.

"When you consider that folks are already living on very, very low government supports, to reduce them by one-fourth to one-third presents an untenable situation," Cullen said. "I would guess that even higher-income families could not afford a 25 to 30 percent reduction in their income and maintain their current obligations."

Unlike Senator Haynes, Cullen said it makes no "moral or financial sense" for the state to abandon these families after investing in them for five years. He sees an opportunity, now that the federal welfare law is being reinstated, for California to revise its rules and rethink the effectiveness of time limits.

If not, it's a "train wreck waiting to happen," said Aimee Durfee, an attorney with Californians for Family Economic Self-Sufficiency, an advocacy coalition for the poor. Smaller checks will mean "less food, less heat and potential housing instability for the family that can no longer pay the rent," she said.

Parents on aid have similar worries.

"When my CalWORKS stops, it will be very difficult to live," said Dien Lang, a 43-year-old San Jose father of two. Lang has been on public assistance for five years, working in high-tech assembly lines and supporting a mentally ill wife.

He understands the government offers only limited support for families like his, but he argues that since the recent wave of layoffs in Silicon Valley, jobs are harder to come by. Lang worries about supporting his family next year, with a shrunken welfare check. "I go to a lot of companies and look for a job, but they're not hiring," he said.

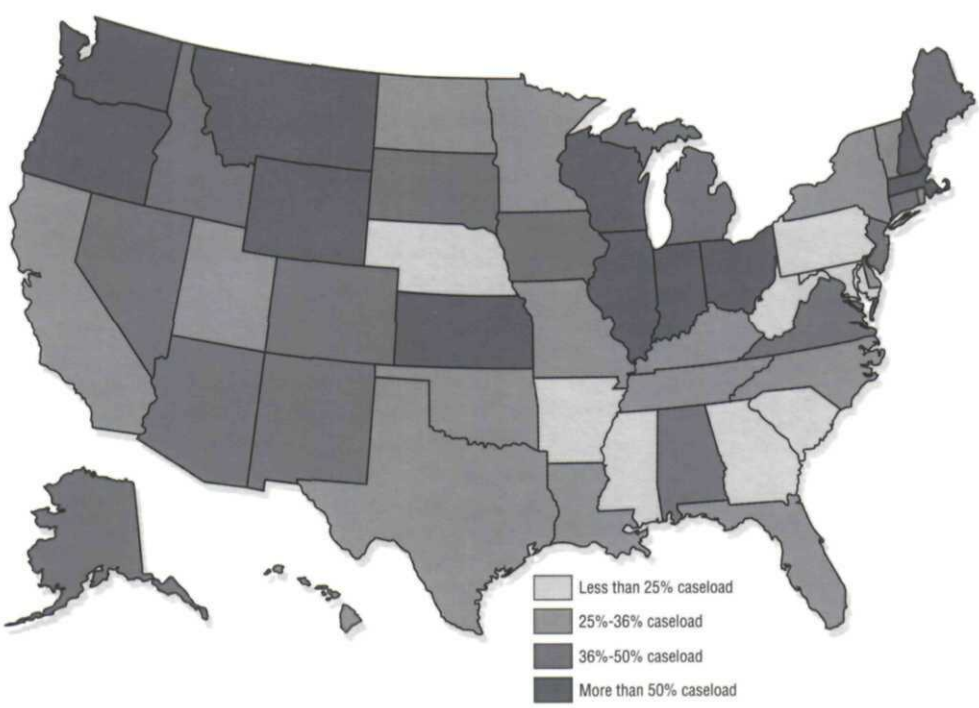
Counties on the front line

Some California counties have considered plans to eliminate the time limit requirement by picking up the cost of the welfare checks for those who reach the five year limit. But with the state reining in health and welfare spending to balance its budget, most local governments are also strapped for cash. Former welfare recipients may not be a high priority.

So for now, counties are notifying people of the looming cuts through letters and home visits. At the same time, they're hoping to identify alternative support through nonprofit agencies.

Work and welfare

Federal mandates require states to have 50% of their adult caseload participating in work-related activities for at least 30 hours a week within the first two years of receiving welfare benefits. Only a smattering of states meet or exceed that goal, and California, where only one-third of welfare recipients are engaged in work-related activities, is not among them.



Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2000
Note: Vermont operates under a waiver and does not report a work participation rate.

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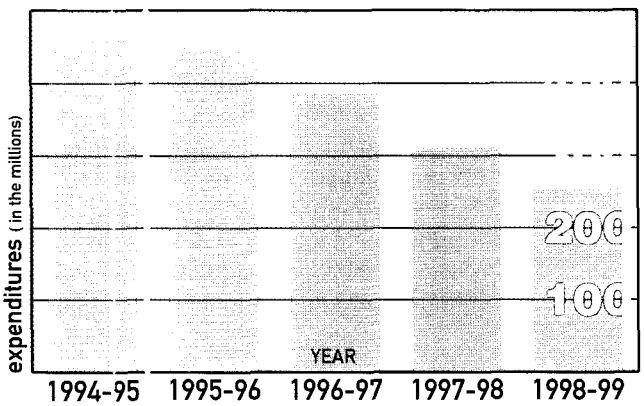
Less outlay

With the drop in welfare recipients has come a corresponding drop in cash outlay for benefits. In 1994-1995, prior to welfare reform, California averaged $487 million a month in payments. By 1998-1999, state expenditures dropped by 45% to $267 million in average monthly statewide payments.



Source: California Department of Social Services, 2001

Their approaches are as diverse as geography, demographics and employment opportunities in California. Just as states can devise their own versions of the federal welfare plan, under CalWORKS, counties have the flexibility to deal with their clients as they choose.

In Sacramento, social workers are knocking on the doors of thousands of recipients who have no jobs, analyzing their situations for barriers to work that may have gone unnoticed in the last five years — mental or physical illnesses, violent home lives or failure to grasp what the limited world of welfare is all about.

"We want to make sure we don't discontinue someone because of a time-out that perhaps we should have exempted because of other problems," said Jane Rasmussen, deputy director of Sacramento County's Department of Human Assistance.

San Diego County is using volunteer senior mentors to warn and assist 1,850 parents scheduled to lose cash aid. Contra Costa County is coordinating with a local interfaith coalition to notify its recipients. In Santa Clara County, a unique pilot program uses Vietnamese social workers and $50 grocery vouchers to lure adults timing off aid into English classes and job training. Sixty-five percent of people facing time limits in Silicon Valley are Southeast Asian refugees; almost all are married and working.

In sprawling Los Angeles County, where the majority of the state's welfare recipients live, letters are being sent to 43,000 adults on aid informing them that time is running out. Workers with the Department of Public Social Services are being retrained to effectively deliver the message to long-term families that they need back-up plans — and quick. Director Margaret Quinn is also instituting a push for "diversion." In some cases, parents are being advised to forgo cash benefits and save them for future use rather than "eating up" all their time on aid, she said.

Charletha Howard of South Central Los Angeles is already plotting her survival strategy. Right now, she survives on a $631 welfare grant and occasional work as a dispatcher, clerk or organizer for local nonprofit agencies. She anticipates that the time limit will cut her household welfare grant by $180.

To make up for it, the single mother of four plans to cook meals for her neighbors — at $3 a plate for breakfasts — if that's what it takes."I'll do anything I can as long as it's legal," Howard said.

Howard, 40, is critical of CalWORKS' 32-hour weekly work requirements because it has meant leaving her school-age children unsupervised and at the mercy of gangs and violence. Her oldest two children are now incarcerated, and the family was forced to move into shelters, she said.

But she has praise for the system as well because she believes she is heading toward greater independence with new skills.

"The welfare-to-work program, it taught me how to work because I had never worked before that," Howard said. "I never wanted to be in the mainstream, never wanted to be part of a society."

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The first victims of welfare reform

Congress created a carrot-and-a-stick approach in its 1996 welfare reform, giving more to job training but also ordering a lifetime limit for aid. But one major challenge for poverty programs is that individual cases are so unique they don't fit neatly into categories. Here, the stories of two Californians facing their lifetime limit illustrate the different experiences and contrasting outlooks from welfare reform's new frontier.

By Emelyn Rodriguez

Pamela Link with her children — Ezeque, T'keyah and Maliah

In 1996, Congress enacted landmark welfare reforms that placed strict, five-year lifetime limits on cash assistance. The hope was that poor families would be motivated to find jobs.

In California, the time limits went into effect January 1998. However, in an effort to soften the blow, the state will not cut off all benefits. Poor families will continue to receive cash assistance for children, as well as food stamps and health benefits through Medi-Cal. Still, the clock is ticking for an estimated 114,000 adults who will lose their benefits by year's end. Because many of these families are living on the edge, welfare officials are worried that the cuts will result in increased homelessness and in parents giving their kids up to foster care or adoption.

In Sacramento County, about 5,000 families will lose federal cash benefits. Half of them are working families who receive assistance because their jobs pay so little — an average of $8.43 an hour. The other half consist of families without a breadwinner.

However, one-third of the county's unemployed welfare recipients have barriers

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Debra Buck with three of her four children — Brieanna, Edward, and Charleith

to employment such as severe depression, mental health issues, substance abuse or learning disabilities, said Cheryl Davis, director of Sacramento County's Department of Human Assistance. Another third are actively seeking employment but have little or no work history or lack a high school education. Yet another third are going back to school to improve their job skills. "They believe that their future will be brighter with higher education, and they won't need us anymore," Davis said.

Here are the stories of two Sacramento County families who will soon be timed out.

Pamela Link

After more than eight years on welfare, Pamela Link, a spirited, red-haired, single mother of three, is worried as she faces an uncertain future. In January, she will be banned for life from receiving welfare assistance under the strict time limit that Congress ordered in 1996.

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"If I have to work more than one job, that's what I'll do because I don't want my kids to go without," said Link, a Rancho Cordova resident who currently works 35 hours a week as a telemarketer. "I'm not a lazy person. I'll do what I have to do to survive."

Raised in a series of foster homes as a child, Link, 29, says she has always worked to support herself. In high school, she volunteered answering school phones, faxing documents, typing memos and staffing the front desk in order to learn basic office skills. "I knew I wanted to work with people," she said.

Ten years later, Link has had a string of sales and telemarketing jobs that paid so little she qualified for a welfare check. "It always seemed like I would get jobs that barely paid enough to live on, but no added benefits and no room for advancement," she said. Yet she scraped by with the help of family and friends.

Link began receiving assistance shortly after her son, Ezeque, was born nine years ago. She wanted to leave behind the dead-end jobs and a failed relationship in order to build a better future. "I was in an abusive situation," she said. "I worked all my life and, at that time, I couldn't further my education and work to support my family."

Her plan was to enroll at Western Career College and study to become a veterinary assistant. However, the demands of motherhood and late night studying took its toll, and Link was forced to drop out and work full-time instead.

She later had two more kids, T'keyah, now 8, and Maliah, now 2. Link said she worked during her third pregnancy up to the day Maliah was born. After giving birth, she went back to work two days later. "I couldn't afford [more time off]," she explained.

The Link family

Even though Link worked long hours, her paltry pay was not enough. "If I didn't have assistance, I wouldn't have made it," she said. "I would have had to put [the kids] in foster care or give them up."

At the time, Link believed that welfare assistance would be temporary. "It was just something to get me through," she said. Looking back now, Link remarked, "I was so naïve." She wishes she had known of — or had taken advantage of — more opportunities. Back then, however, she said there were not as many educational or job-training benefits as there are today.

Sometimes, Link still leans on family members when she is short, or when emergencies arise. Her sister helps out by occasionally buying the kids shoes, clothing and toys. Family members also baby-sit the kids when child care is not available.

Most days, Link drops the kids off at Child Action, a Sacramento-based nonprofit organization that contracts with the state to provide free child care for welfare recipients. After Link's assistance runs out, she may still qualify for subsidized child care for the next two years, as long as her pay stays below 75 percent of the state's median income level. By the third year, however, child care is only provided if funding is available.

Funding for the program has always been a year-to-year struggle, but it is especially difficult now as the state grapples with a sizeable deficit, said Billee Willson, child care coordinator with the Department of Human Assistance in Sacramento County. "Every year, we've had a

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"When you've struggled all your life, you pray there's something better out there. A better job. Peace of mind. And [you] hope that it's not too late to think of dreams. Maybe going back to school."
— Pamela Link

difficult battle to retain it," said Willson. "So every year it is always in jeopardy."

Link says she doesn't know what she'll do when, or if, her child care subsidy ends. "If I had to pay for child care and work, there would be no way I could afford to pay my bills and my rent," she said.

Link currently earns $9.50 an hour (slightly higher than average for Sacramento County welfare recipients) and works 35 hours a week for a telemarketing firm. But she has to rely on Medi-Cal because she gets no health or other benefits from this job. She also doesn't have her own transportation and must take a 15-minute bus ride and then walk a mile and a half to her job.

She is looking for a better paying position with benefits. Still, some days the pressure is difficult to handle, Link says. "You want money in the bank, a car, a home," she said. "You want the kind of job that you look forward to going to everyday. Telemarketing is very stressful. You have people saying negative things to you all day long."

Link hopes to one day earn between $12 to $13 an hour working for a big telecommunications firm like AT&T or Verizon wireless. They are closer to her home and they involve incoming calls and helping customers place orders. A job, she says, "where people are calling me."

But Link would need to make even more — nearly double her current salary — to stay afloat.

Cheryl Davis, who heads Sacramento County's welfare program, said it would take a salary of about $16 an hour for a family to make ends meet in Sacramento, if the wage earner does not get health benefits.

"These jobs aren't so readily available," Davis said. "The big concern for us is when the clock is stopped [on welfare benefits], that there will be increased homelessness or an increase of children going into foster care because families can't afford to take care of them."

Indeed, Link is constantly worrying about having enough money to cover food and rent. When her welfare check is stopped in January, she will lose $120 (the adult portion) of her monthly household income. Since California is one of a handful of states that do not entirely cut off aid, she will continue to receive $69 in welfare assistance for her children in addition to Medi-Cal benefits and $200 in food stamps. Link's $710-a-month rent for her two-bedroom apartment takes a big chunk out of her paycheck, so she has placed herself on a waiting list for federally subsidized housing. But so far, she has not received word on her application.

"I live within my means, but those means are really confined," she said. There is practically no money for leisure or entertainment. "I want someday to earn enough money to take my kids on vacation. They've never been to Disneyland or Waterworld. I want to be able to afford the little things. Like, my daughter wants to take ballet and my son wants to enroll in karate lessons. But these are things we can't afford."

Link says she is scared as she contemplates the approaching deadline and the end of her benefits. She wishes she had moved faster in signing up for subsidized housing. She wishes for a better job. But she is hopeful that somehow things will work out. "Hopefully, ... through hard work and job searching, I'll be in a better position," she said.

"When you've struggled all your life, you pray there's something better out there. A better job. Peace of mind. And [you] hope that it's not too late to think of dreams. Maybe going back to school."

Debra Buck

Debra Buck recalls the day in 1997 when she and others on public assistance were brought together by their caseworkers and told how welfare reform was going to work.

Buck had been on welfare for over a decade, and she was terrified. "I had been on it for so long I didn't think I could live without it," said the 42-year-old single mother of four. "I was thinking, 'I'm going to have to go to work. I'm going to have to get off it.' It was scary."

Five years later, Buck runs a women's shelter for a Sacramento church, and she is confident, empowered and fearless. "Now I look forward to living without [welfare]. And I think it's wonderful."

However, the transformation wasn't quick or easy, Buck admits.

A former teenage runaway, Buck ended up in New Orleans where she picked up a drug habit and became a prostitute. "It was the lifestyle," she said. "It was easy."

She got on welfare after becoming pregnant with her first child, Rachel, now 14. "I was with her dad," Buck said. "He was an alcoholic, and I was a drug addict. I was hooking to support us."

When Buck found out she was pregnant, she quit walking the streets and sought public assistance. Welfare "saved me from that life," she said. "But it's like a trap. It's hard to get out of it because it's so easy sometimes. ... A lot of people have used aid for so long, they don't go any-

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The Buck family

where. They stay stuck in it."

After having another child, Brieanna, now 9, Buck moved to a Sacramento shelter and became involved with another man. However, the relationship turned violent. After years of abuse, Buck decided she had enough and walked out. She sought to fill the void in her life and found religion.

"Life's been really good ever since," Buck said. "After I left [the relationship], things started changing a lot. We split up on a Tuesday, and I was saved Thursday night at church. ... All that I had done before that did not matter. I thought that I was worthy. I had a future, a hope and a goal. I didn't have any of that before then."

Welfare reform prompted Buck to make some positive changes in her life. She worked to improve her job skills and is even going to school again. "When they made the changes, it was a great thing," she said. "It got people working again, being self-sufficient and it helped people gain self-respect."

Since then, Buck had two more children, 6-year-old Edward "Mister," and 4-year-old Charleith.

"I know I will make it. I don't doubt myself anymore."
— Debra Buck

Today, Buck runs the women's shelter for The Life Church in Sacramento, a program that she had once taken part in. "I had lived the same kind of life these women have. I was a drug addict, lived six years with domestic violence, led a life of prostitution. I've done all that," she said.

Buck gets a small stipend from the church, which also provides her with free rent, utilities and use of its van. She also earns extra money (about $400 to $500 a month) babysitting for Child Action, a nonprofit group that provides free services to welfare moms.

Despite her busy schedule, Buck finds time to attend some classes at American River College. She hopes to one day get an associate degree in human services and become a family services worker. Her expenses, such as books and transportation, are paid for by the county.

Buck knows that it may take years to complete her degree, but she feels that she has come a long way by merely returning to school. "I was there on my first day and there was this sea of young people," she recalled. "I kept thinking, 'I'm going to school.' I was quite proud of myself."

She now looks toward the future with a new confidence that she and her family will make it through, regardless of what changes come. Her benefits end in December, but Buck says she has no worries.

"I know I will make it," she said. "I don't doubt myself anymore."

Emelyn Rodriguez is senior editor at California Journal. *Comments may be sent to* **edit@statenet.com.**

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Splitting our differences

Is secession fever spreading? Just when Los Angeles voters are moving toward a November decision on whether to allow the San Fernando Valley and Hollywood to break away, another secession drive is brewing.

The new "Mission County" would consist of the northern portion of picturesque Santa Barbara County, including Lompoc, Santa Maria, Guadalupe and the Santa Ynez Valley. Overall, it would have a population of roughly 198,000, leaving Santa Barbara County with roughly 211,000.

Proponents are collecting the 23,000 signatures necessary to place a secession vote on the ballot — perhaps as early as 2004. A similar proposal made it to the ballot in 1978 but was defeated.

Like the Valley drive, the Santa Barbara movement is a political power struggle whose roots are cultural, economic and ideological. It pits the predominantly rural, agricultural, conservative north against the more urban, wealthy, moderate-to-liberal, celebrity-sprinkled south.

Like the Valley drive, the Santa Barbara movement is a political power struggle whose roots are cultural, economic and ideological.

Support for the new county comes mainly from the north. And like those of the LA crusades, Santa Barbara northerners argue that theirs is a drive to bring government closer to the people and make it more responsive to their special needs.

Currently, three of the five members of the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors are more sympathetic to the south county's philosophy and style (although a vote on this November's ballot to recall Supervisor Gail Marshall could tip the balance in favor of north county politics).

Over time, many northerners have chafed at their "domination" by those "liberals." Secession proponents argue that south county supervisors tend to support stringent environmental regulations that may protect the charm of the South Coast and the wealthy enclaves of Montecito and Santa Barbara but which stunt the economic progress of farmers and ranchers in the north.

As a Santa Maria vegetable farmer complained, "To take those same political elements of control and to try to impose them on the entire county shows they miss the diversity of Santa Barbara County." The perception that diversity demands division is significant to assessing the statewide impact of recent secession drives.

What does it say about the future of this multifaceted state if, more and more, its citizens begin to look toward secession as a solution to their differences? Are these campaigns an acknowledgement that diversity must be served? Or do they mask a complete rejection of the notion that diversity should survive?

Even the idea of carving up California is not a new one; there have been at least 27 attempts at a north-south split. Break-up proposals were floated even before statehood was granted.

More than two decades ago, political analyst Kevin Phillips wrote about a "new political geography of localism and neighborhoods; the substitution of causes for political parties; the narrowing of loyalties; the fragmentation of government; the twilight of authority." He called it "the Balkanization of America."

Should California become more and more balkanized, there will be important consequences for policy and politics. Certainly, citizens could be energized by the nearness and accessibility of government to truly get involved in civic life. And that's healthy.

But, the decentralization of community will also increase the tension between regionalism and localism. That's dicey. The problems that 21st century California must address — growth, infrastructure, transportation, water, and the environment, to name a few — require regional solutions. Devolution demands solutions framed close at hand.

Balkanization could also exacerbate the divisiveness of single-issue politics and the intransigence that stems from limited goals and rigid ideologies; both already hobble state and local policy-making.

The dynamics of Southland secession movements reflect the region's varied politics, demography and cultures. How and whether these breakaway attempts play out could provide the answer to the question most critical to defining the future direction of California: Are we a society of people able and willing to be governed for the common good? In other words, are we a state at all?

by Sherry Bebitch Jeffe

Sherry Bebitch Jeffe is a senior scholar at USC's School of Policy, Planning & Development. Comments may be sent to **edit@statenet.com.**

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Twists and turns on the roa

Washington D.C.

Theoretically, Congress will completely rewrite federal welfare law this September. But don't bet on it, unless the climate on Capitol Hill shifts soon. "I haven't seen any sense of momentum," said Representative Cal Dooley (D-Hanford). "It's not something people are talking a lot about."

That momentum could surface as Congress lunges toward its October adjournment and the September 30 expiration of current welfare law. But consider the stretch ahead as lawmakers deal with other matters, including a dozen fat and unfinished appropriations bills. Without them, the government shuts down and voters break out the pitchforks. Finish those, and there's still the new Department of Homeland Security to be created. There's obligatory pre-election partisan positioning to fit in. And then there's the general atmosphere marked by stock market anxieties and

Washington was supposed to have passed a new welfare plan by now and Sacramento should be wrapping up its own version. But the issue stalled in Congress, perhaps until next year. At stake: President Bush's plan has huge new costs for California, but now the issue could be determined by the shape of Congress after the election.

crony capitalism horror stories ideal for passing, say, corporate reforms as Congress did in July. It seems far less opportune for snipping away the social safety net.

Consider, too, the signal sent by White House spokesman Ari Fleischer, who was asked at a July 30 briefing to identify the Bush administration's "top two or three agenda items" before Congress adjourns. Fleischer ticked off eight separate issues, from banning human cloning to protecting pensions, before remembering a ninth — welfare reform — as "another issue" Bush would like finished.

"The highway is jammed with cars," Fleischer acknowledged, "and if the Senate waits much longer, it's going to be a traffic jam that's going to result in not all of the cars being able to arrive at their final destination."

All of which means the current Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, or TANF, program could well be extended for another year. The November elections would then shape what welfare looks like next year, particularly in the teeter-totter Senate where Democrats currently cling to a one-seat advantage. This means more time, in other words, for molding

By Michael Doyle

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the policy details incredibly important to California and the roughly 500,000 families now on the state's welfare rolls.

House and Senate differences

There are clear enough differences between the bill passed by the House of Representatives in May on a 229-197 vote and the version approved by the Senate Finance Committee in late June. These center on how much welfare recipients will be required to work, what counts as work, how many more recipients must meet the work requirements and how much assistance is provided for child care. By and large, the Senate's version appears more congenial to California — more generous in aid and less onerous in requirements.

"To some extent, that works to the advantage of those of us who oppose the [House] bill," Representative Bob Matsui (D-Sacramento) said of any delay until next year. "It will put more pressure on the Republicans."

This relative welfare calm is particularly striking when compared to the storm that surrounded the 1996 elimination of welfare-as-we-knew it. It is instructive to recall that

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Although the 1996 reform bill passed despite opposition from 22 California House Democrats and both of the state's Democratic senators, one-third of all aid recipients were working in 1999, compared to only 7 percent in 1992.

political context. Then-President Bill Clinton had famously promised to reform welfare but had vetoed two previous reform bills. GOP strategists calculated they could send a third welfare bill that would either force a third veto they could exploit during the campaign, or they could collect a presidential signature that would alienate core Democratic voters.

The intensity, moreover, was more than simply Capitol Hill theatrics. In ending welfare as an entitlement, some honestly feared, as House Minority Leader Richard Gephardt (D-Missouri) fretted in 1995, that "a Republican welfare bill will throw millions of children out on the street without doing anything to move people from welfare to work."

The cataclysmic rhetoric has long since faded from both sides. As Matsui noted, referring to Ronald Reagan's favorite caricature of the 1980s, "you don't read anymore about the welfare queens taking advantage of the [government]." In turn, neither do the Democrats get quite as far with warnings about heartless Republicans.

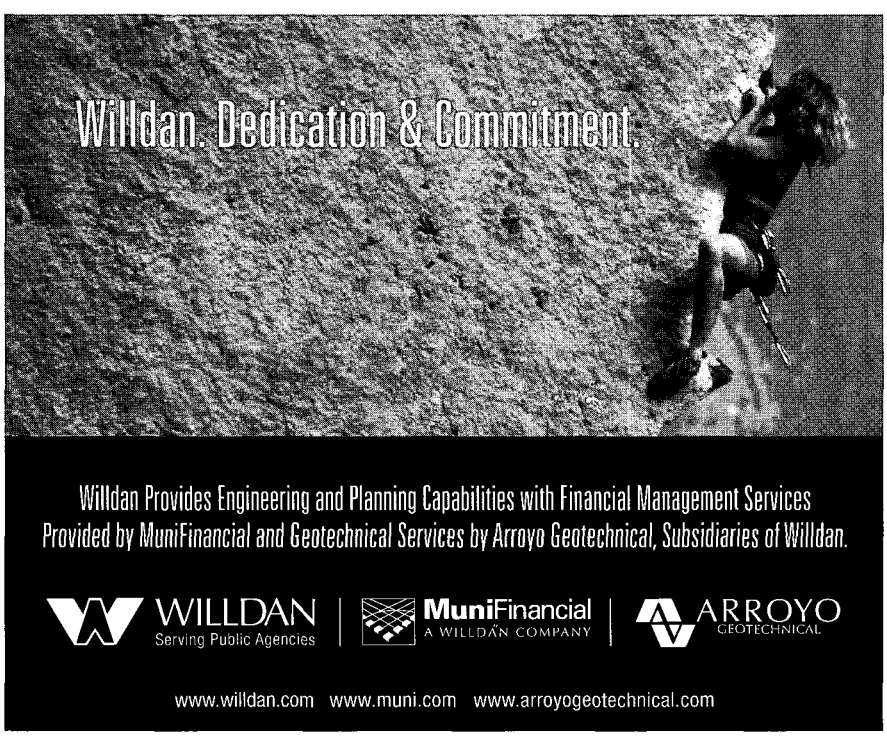
"The fact of the matter is, they were wrong," Representative Bill Thomas (R-Bakersfield), said during a House debate this year. "We are right."

Although his comments could be seen as tactless, Thomas can point to some important points. Although the 1996 reform bill passed despite opposition from 22 California House Democrats and both of the state's Democratic senators, one-third of all aid recipients were working in 1999, compared to only 7 percent in 1992. The number of families and individuals receiving aid has dropped by more than 50 percent nationwide since 1996. The teenage birth rate is down 22 percent since the early 1990s. California's welfare caseload fell 43 percent between 1996 and 2000 — an impressive-sounding drop — but one that lagged behind other states. (Some of this is thought to be due to California's relatively generous state program, which offers higher grants to recipients, sets a higher income level as a cutoff, and allows children to continue receiving assistance after parents have been forced off.)

A technical conflict

Shervin Boloorian, legislative analyst with the California Institute for Federal Policy Research, elaborated that "both Democrats and Republicans have generally agreed that this is not going to be an entitlement anymore." The conflict now is less conceptual and more technical, and thus considerably less intense: Should work requirements increase to 40 hours a week instead of the current 30, as the House bill proposes? Should vocational education still count toward meeting federal requirements, as the Senate proposes? Should states be permitted to restore welfare to all legal immigrants admitted since 1996, as under the Senate bill?

Fittingly, the state with the largest welfare caseload appears well stocked with senior legislators positioned for influencing the answers to these welfare rewrite questions. As chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, Thomas controls the panel claiming most of the responsibility for welfare legislation. Representative Wally Herger (R-Chico) chairs the Ways and Means subcommittee on human resources, from where the legislation



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originally came. Representative Pete Stark (D-Hayward) is the most senior Democrat on Herger's human resources subcommittee, while Matsui is, like Stark one of the most senior Democrats on Ways and Means. The other House committee responsible for welfare legislation, Education and the Workforce, has as its most senior Democrat Representative George Miller of Martinez.

So California's interests should be well articulated, right?

"You're assuming," Miller said, "that we're all pulling in the same direction."

That would be a rare occurrence for California lawmakers.

The House's welfare reform legislation emerged from Thomas's Ways and Means Committee on a straight party line vote. That's become commonplace for big-ticket issues considered by the committee chaired by Thomas, who is equally famous on Capitol Hill for his intelligence and his abrasiveness.

"He didn't do a very good job, because it's so partisan," Matsui said. "So this is in a state of gridlock right now. It would have been nice if he had reached out."

But Democrats, too, withheld cooperation in the early stages; and there are, in any event, tactical considerations at play. Anticipating negotiations with the Democratic-controlled Senate, House Republicans have reason to toughen up their bill as much as possible.

The House draped a label about as subtle as neon around the legislation dubbed the "Personal Responsibility, Work and Family Promotion Act of 2002." The Democratic-controlled Senate Finance Committee showed superior acronymic skills with the "Work, Opportunity and Responsibility for Kids" act, or WORK.

Whatever it's called, it won't be cheap.

Money, money

The new welfare measure will keep providing fixed grants to states; the same amount, $16.5 billion, would be provided over five years. States would also be saddled with new burdens.

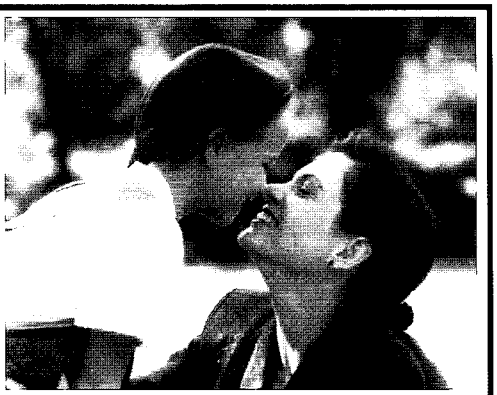
In April, the state's Legislative Analyst's Office estimated that California would face additional costs of $2.8 billion over five years in order to meet the president's new plan. Unpalatable choices would confront the state. The LAO noted that added child care would have to be funded by cutting the state's relatively generous grants, or money could be drawn from the already hard-pressed state treasury. Child care is the big-ticket item here, both financially and conceptually. With it, costs rise. Without it, programs fail.

"It was bad enough that their father abandoned us," Representative Lynn Woolsey (D-Santa Rosa), a former welfare recipient, recalled during 1996 debate. "But the worst thing about the whole situation was trying to get adequate child care. We had 13 different child care situations the first 12 months that I went to work. That was the hell year of our lives...[and] it was not until our child care situation settled, and my mother came to town to take care of them, that our job [opportunities] grew."

The House bill guarantees an additional $1 billion in federal child care spending over the next five years. More generous than what President George W. Bush had proposed, this is still less than the Senate bill's guarantee of an additional $5.5 billion over five years. Presumably, House and Senate negotiators will end up splitting the money difference. They'll also have to do similar difference-splitting with some key percentages.

The current law requires that at least 50 percent of adult recipients be engaged in work or "alternative self-sufficiency activities." States like California have been permitted to reduce this requirement as a reward for cutting caseloads. The House and Senate bills agree on raising this to 70 percent by the year 2007, with the caseload reduction credit phased out. Compare this with California's participation rate of 31 percent in fiscal 2000, and the magnitude of the challenge becomes clear. This is especially so, since adults

Community colleges provide California families a permanent bridge from welfare to work.



CalWORKs participants who left a California community college in 1999-2000 with a certificate or associate degree experienced a 78% increase in compensation their first year out of college.

California Community Colleges
The Way California Works.

www.waycaliforniaworks.org

A message from the Community College League of California.

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over the age of 55 and those with very young children are exempt from the work requirements. The upshot thus falls hardest on everyone else.

"We believe that meeting the 70 percent participation rate would require a full-time work effort by virtually every able-bodied adult," the state Legislative Analyst's Office warned in its April report.

House Republicans, moreover, also insist that the work requirements increase to 40 hours a week for all aid recipients. The current range spans 20 hours for single parents with young children to 30 hours for single parents with older children. The Senate keeps the work requirement at the current 30 hours a week.

"We're trying to maintain that this is a welfare-to-work program," said Representative Richard Pombo (R-Tracy), "and I don't want to backtrack on that or relax the work requirements."

Over half of California's aid recipients are single parents with children under the age of 6, making the big hike in work requirements a particularly big challenge.

How the hours add up is another crucial technical dispute. The administration and House Republicans want the 40 hour requirement to be met by a combination of at least 24 hours of work and 16 hours of related activity. California welfare administrators call that formula a burden.

"The proposed mix of 24 hours work and 16 hours other activity seems arbitrary and difficult to administer," Will Lightbourne of Santa Clara County, vice president of the County Welfare Directors Association of California, cautioned in congressional testimony earlier this year.

Unlike the House bill, the Senate bill explicitly permits counting vocational education for part of the hours. Boloorian, of the California Institute for Federal Policy Research, called this a crucial element for the state "because the community college system is so intertwined with welfare" through the current vocational education offerings.

This question of education is central. Republicans don't want to create a permanent welfare-to-school program; work is the whole point. On the other hand, particularly with the harder cases remaining on the welfare rolls, some classroom help is needed. A Public Policy Institute of California study in 1999 noted that 41 percent of the state's welfare recipients had "very low" basic skills — the kind of skills needed, say, for holding down a job.

Some different kinds of basic skills will be required of the lawmakers charged with rewriting the welfare law. These are the skills of negotiation, compromise, foresight and principled flexibility — the skills, that is to say, not just of the politician but of the legislator.

Michael Doyle is a reporter in the Washington, D.C., bureau of McClatchy newspapers. Comments may be sent to **edit@statenet.com.**

Provision	Current law	President's proposal
Participation hours	20 hours per week for single parents with a child under age 6; 30 hours for single parents with older children; 35 hours for two parent families.	Increases requirement to 40 hours for all families.
Participation activities	Eligible activities generally include: employment, work experience, community service, job search, vocational education, and provision of child-care services.	Requires that 24 of the 40 hours include "direct work" activities (employment, work experience or community service). Gives states flexibility to count other activities towards remaining16 hours. In addition, for three months in any two-year period, states may count other activities towards the direct work requirement.
Statewide participation	50% of all families, and 90 % of two-parent families must participate in welfare-to-work activities.	Increases all families' rate to 70% by FY 2007 and eliminates two-parent rate.

Source: California Legislative Analyst's Office

Reforming Welfare Reform

The unexpected success of the 1996 welfare reform bill fueled expectations that the reauthorization vote required this year in Congress would be a bipartisan issue. But President Bush split the parties last spring when he ordered strict new rules, particularly a plan to sharply increase the number of work hours required for welfare eligibility. The Republican-controlled House passed a bill last May containing most of the president's plan. But the legislation has stalled in the Senate, where majority Democrats are pushing a milder reform plan that also contains more federal money. The 1996 welfare reform bill is set to expire on September 30. If an agreement is not signed by then, Congress may be forced to pass a temporary extension of existing laws.

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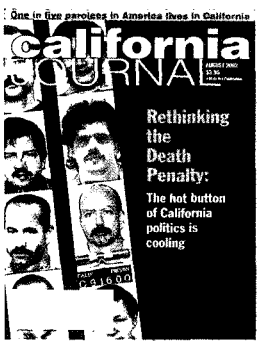
letters

Integrity and the Minnies

Your July 2002 "Minnie Awards" name four Hispanic male lawmakers as having "tarnished integrity" out of six so-called "tarnished" members. As such, it is guilty of mistaken identity. Using your criteria for "tarnished," it is incredible that you should find only six lawmakers out of 120 with so-called "tarnished integrity." Even more incredible is that four of the six are Latinos. Your characterization of Senator Richard Alarcon, Assemblyman Marco Firebaugh and Senator Richard Polanco (all Democrats) is inaccurate and unfair. Worse, it documents an historic double standard in news coverage when it comes to minority legislators: One ethical standard exists for legislators of color and quite another for white lawmakers.

Glib but likeable white guys like Republican Senator Jim Brulte, who take money in six-figure denominations but know how to cater to reporters, become news sources and get one kind of treatment. East LA lawmakers and other urban legislators of color get quite another.


One in five parolees in America lives in California
california
JOURNAL
Rethinking the Death Penalty:
The hot button of California politics is cooling

Brulte authored the now infamous electricity deregulation bill primarily to benefit large manufacturers and utilities, and then he collected serious money from both. To add insult to injury, your survey describes Brulte as a policy "problem-solver." It's simply not fair.

If Alarcon, Firebaugh and Polanco owned part interest in a video production house that produced TV ads for utility companies opposed to a statewide utility initiative that they, in their legislative capacity, had chaired hearings on, they would risk federal prosecution and a firestorm of statewide publicity. But that's exactly what Democratic Senator Steve Peace, the other key architect of the deregulation, did with almost no news coverage or law enforcement interest.

Your survey has serious consequences. An unhealthy but understandable cynicism exists among many minority legislators and staff. The lack of fairness in news coverage and prosecutions of alleged misdeeds in comparison to those of white colleagues breeds a feeling that "everybody is doing it," so ethical standards don't really matter. Your unscientific and inaccurate survey feeds this dangerous cynicism.

Untouched by your survey, some of the most powerful politicians in the state routinely engage in decision-making in very close proximity to the exchange of six figure amounts of money. A survey that identifies some of the better minority legislators as "tarnished" while promoting some big-time "tarnished" white politicians as "problem-solvers" makes a bad situation worse.

Sending e-mails to legislative offices and conducting anonymous anecdotal interviews is hardly an empirical method for measuring legislative integrity. Alarcon, Firebaugh, and Polanco will not be candidates for sainthood. Nevertheless, their behavior deserves fair examination in comparison to their peers. A survey that claims they have the least integrity is insulting and just plain wrong. This case of mistaken identity sends an unmistakable message to lawmakers trying to adhere to ethical standards: It doesn't matter what you do, people will think you are crooked. Alarcon, Firebaugh, and Polanco deserve an apology.

Don Fields
Sacramento

Davis and Parole

I would like to thank you for your brave article in which you correctly criticized "Judge Davis," [August 2002] for his no-go despotic parole policy. Articles like this draw public attention to how powerful the position of governor has become, effectively removing the will of the people as exercised by a judge and jury.

Manuela Thiess
Monterey

After-school care

In contrast to what was stated in "The Terminator Takes On a Cause" [August 2002], there is opposition to Proposition 49 (after-school programs) — the League of Women Voters of California. I understand that your piece was an interview and content was largely determined by the interviewee, but we would like to see all sides of this issue presented in future pieces.

Eric Wooten
League of Women Voters of California

Increased funding for after-school programs proposed in Proposition 49 is a great idea and a clear necessity. I would suggest that some of the funds be earmarked for public libraries since they are providing the lion's share of after-school homework assistance in many areas of California. At the very least, public and school librarians should participate in the discussion of how best to meet the after-school needs of our students.

Carolyn Crain, Director
San Marino Public Library

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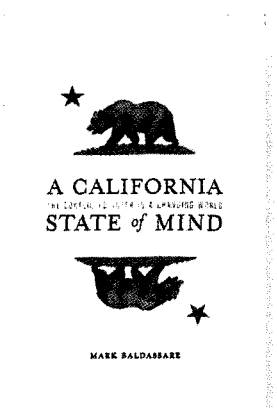
The Latino Century Begins

Experts commonly refer to opinion polls as a "snapshot in time" because attitudes can evolve so quickly. But to look at many surveys conducted over an extended period of time is to hear the voice of California begin to speak. In his latest book, veteran pollster Mark Baldassare translates thousands of live interviews he directed into a discussion about how California views itself on a range of critical issues from school performance and demographic change to the recent challenges from energy shortages and terrorism fears. He explores the roots of a deep and broad distrust of government in the state overall. But in these portions of a chapter excerpted for *California Journal*, Baldassare highlights a striking contrast in the Latino community, which exceeds all other groups when it comes to trusting government. As he explains in the book, *A California State of Mind: The Conflicted Voter in a Changing World*, "nothing could have as profound an effect on politics and policy-making as trust among the growing Latino electorate."

By Mark Baldassare



"A California State of Mind: The Conflicted Voter in a Changing World" is a joint publication of University of California Press and the Public Policy Institute of California. It will be released in October and available online at www.ppic.org.

The 2000 Census confirmed what some demographers were already claiming: California was the first large state to enter the uncharted territory of "majority-minority" status. This meant that no longer did any racial or ethnic group account for a majority of the population. For the first time in the state's 150-year history, the white, non-Hispanic population fell below 50 percent. This change was driven by the growth of the Latino population in the state, due to a large influx of new immigrants and a high birth rate within this group.

Latinos are not only altering the social character of the state; their growing numbers raise significant questions about the state's political future. Latino population growth may also have long-term implications for distrust of government. In this chapter, we see that Latinos exceed all groups in California when it comes to trust in government. In a state that has been dominated for more than two decades by white voters who lack confidence in public institutions and elected officials, nothing could have as profound an effect on politics and policy-making as trust among the growing Latino electorate.

There are good reasons to expect Latinos to subscribe to a different point of view about government than most California voters. Latinos do not fit the profile of suburban, affluent, college educated, issue-focused, and more loosely partisan voters with "post-materialist values" and thus are unlikely joiners of the "New Political Culture". Their demographics are more like the ethnic voters of the American past — many are immigrants, have children, live in lower-income

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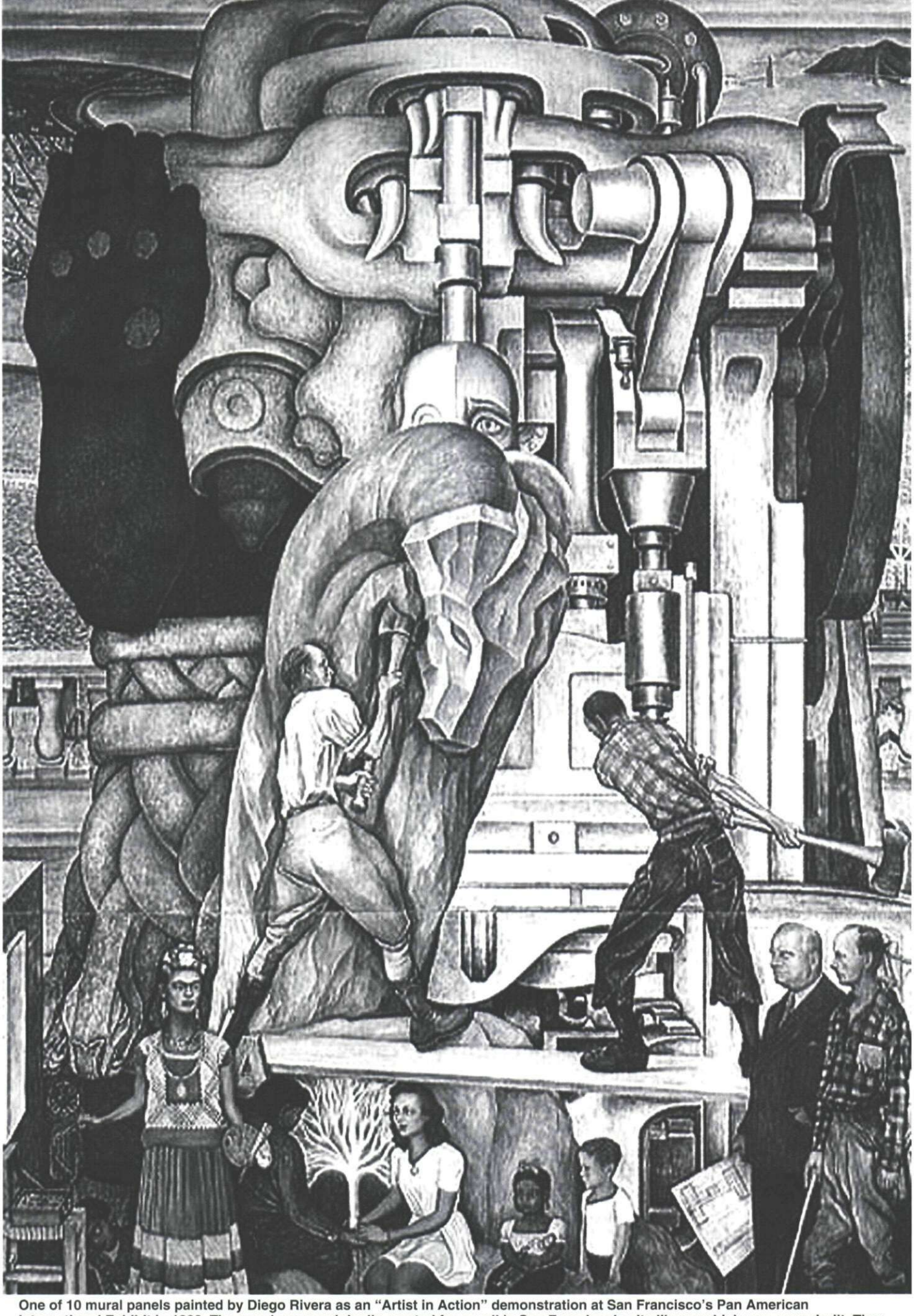

One of 10 mural panels painted by Diego Rivera as an "Artist in Action" demonstration at San Francisco's Pan American International Exhibit in 1939. The panels were originally created for a wall in San Francisco's city library which was never built. They sat in storage until they were finally installed at San Francisco City College in 1961.

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California's Latino population

1990	7.8 million	26%
1995	9.1	28
2000	10.9	32
2005	12.3	33
2010	14.0	35
2015	15.6	37
2020	17.8	39
2025	20.1	42
2030	22.5	44
2035	25.2	46
2040	28.1	48

Sources: Baldassare (2000), U.S. Census (2001); population estimates beyond 2000 are from the California Department of Finance (1988).

households, and reside in big cities — qualities that provide a focus on meeting basic needs and a desire for government to offer more public services to help achieve the American Dream.

While many Californians had come to subscribe to a more secular and individualistic world view that de-emphasizes the role of government and political party in their lives, many Latinos follow the lead of earlier European immigrants to America in valuing the importance of government, political party, church, and family in their decisions. So, the growth of the Latino population offers a potentially powerful countervailing force in the state's political climate: they are fiscal liberals and social conservatives at a time when many voters are fiscal conservatives and social liberals.

But the growth of the Latino population also raises some important social and economic issues. Lieutenant Governor Cruz Bustamante best summarized a chief concern raised by racial and ethnic change in an August 1999 speech in which he launched the "Commission for One California." He said, "Many significant challenges face California today — water, the environment, the quality of schools, affordable housing. Today, I want to talk about the most important challenge facing us. It is the challenge of living together as one California. Our future demands finding common ground." The violent and deadly conflicts that surfaced in the spring of 1992 in response to the Rodney King beating trial verdict had placed many of the state's residents on alert about the fragile nature of multi-ethnic/racial relations. Moreover, a series of controversial ballot initiatives that passed in the mid-1990s seemed to indicate that white voters were uncomfortable with the racial and ethnic changes underway in the state, as they were favorably responding to cuts in programs that benefited the growing ranks of minorities. Latinos, in particular, were taken aback and were mobilized by some politicians' efforts to use their group as the scapegoat for the state's problems.

But that was then, and circumstances changed. The negative feelings toward immigration and pessimism about intergroup relations were generated during a deep recession. By the late 1990s, the state had seen its employment levels rise and its budget woes disappear, so the economic and fiscal pressures of immigration were not as relevant. And while racial and ethnic tensions may have flared up from time to time, there had been no repeat of the serious episode of the 1992 civil disturbances in Los Angeles.

Californians were mellowing toward racial and ethnic issues that in earlier times were tearing the state apart. In our focus groups, one respondent remarked simply, "Diversity is always better." Another respondent said, "The positive is that you get to meet a lot of different people from a lot of different backgrounds, and you get to expand your knowledge," while another individual added, "They come here from other parts of the world because they have talent we need." Another respondent said, "I think it's a welcome change. We have the influx of all the new folks coming in, and it's done nothing but making it better." The state's diversity had a broad public appeal in times of prosperity, and once-popular anti-immigrant sentiments were now out of favor. Candidates from both parties were courting Latino voters, who had been previously ignored, preaching the politics of inclusion and avoiding racially divisive issues.

In our surveys, Californians were keenly aware of the rapid demographic change occurring in the state, but they were taking it in stride. Seven in 10 residents thought the racial and ethnic composition of their region was changing, while four in 10 said it was changing "a lot." Yet, in all of the surveys we conducted during the 2000 cycle, only a handful of residents named race and ethnic relations as the most important problem facing the state. Eight in 10 Californians thought that racial and ethnic groups were getting along very well or somewhat well in their regions.

Similarly, Californians were very aware of the trends in immigration but had softened their attitudes about its effects. Nine in 10 residents were aware that the state's immigrant population in California had been increasing in recent years. Throughout the 2000 elections, no more than one-in-12 residents said that legal and illegal immigration was the most important issue facing the state. The majority of residents held the view that immigrants were a benefit to California because of their hard work and job

Ethnicity of California elected officials

	seats	latino	white	asian	black
U.S. Congress	52	6	40	2	4
Democrats	32	6	20	2	4
Republicans	20	0	20	0	0
State Senate	40	7	31	0	2
Democrats	26	7	17	0	2
Republicans	14	0	14	0	0
State Assembly	80	20	53	3	4
Democrats	50	16	27	3	4
Republicans	30	4	26	0	0

Source: California Secretary of State (2000c), PPIC "Just the Facts" (2000a).

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skills, and those who thought that immigrants were a burden to California were now in the minority. A strong job market and large budget surplus in state government had helped to improve the public mood toward immigrants. The contrast with a few years earlier was striking: Californians were very concerned about illegal and legal immigration early in the 1990s. Many cited immigration as the most important issue in the 1994 elections, and many supported an anti-illegal immigration initiative.

Clearly, no topic is more important for the state's political and economic future than what happens with the Latino population over the next several decades. The year 2000 was a turning point and could be viewed as the beginning of the "Latino century" for the state. Not only in sheer population size, but also in shifts in public attitudes and political significance, there were signs that Latino growth was having statewide effects.

The remainder of this chapter reviews the population growth and socioeconomic conditions of Latinos and their growing presence in the state's political and policymaking arena, including their voting record, voter profiles, and presence in elected office. We look at the 2000 elections for evidence of how the Latino vote was expressed in the presidential and U.S. Senate races and several state initiatives and, in particular, how the Latino vote influenced the process and the outcome of the 2000 state election. Latinos have tilted partisan politics in the state and could have an even more profound influence on the role of government. This potential is evident in how Latinos relate to issues such as government trust, government regulations, and taxes and spending.

More trust in government

Latinos' fiscal liberality is consistent with their greater trust in government at all levels. Californians overall distrust the federal government's ability to perform its functions. Fewer than one-in-three said the federal government can be trusted always or most of the time, while most thought that Washington can only sometimes be trusted to do what is right. In contrast, nearly half of Latinos said that they trust the federal government either always or most of the time. Whites, blacks and Asians all expressed a lower degree of trust in the federal government than Latinos. U.S.-born Latinos were less trusting than those who are naturalized citizens, but even they trusted government more than Californians as a whole.

The vast majority of California residents believed that people in government waste the money we pay in taxes, and six in 10 thought they wasted a lot of it. Latinos were less likely than whites to hold this point of view. Slightly more than half of Latinos thought the government wastes a lot of money. Latinos were more confident than others in the fiscal performance of government even after we controlled for other factors.

Two in three residents believed that the federal government is pretty much run by a few big interests looking out for themselves. While seven in 10 whites held this negative view of Washington, only about half of Latinos were of the opinion that their government is run by and for special interests. Latinos also had a little more faith than others that the federal government pays at least some attention to what the people think when it decides what to do, and they were much more likely than whites to have at least some confidence that when the federal government decides to solve a problem, that the problem will actually be solved.

Latinos also tended to hold their state government in higher regard than other Californians. The trend is consistent when we repeat the questions we asked about overall trust, fiscal performance, special interests, and problem solving at the federal level. About half of Latinos said that they trust the state government to do what is right always or most of the time, compared to four in 10 whites. Only four in 10 Latinos believed the state government wastes a

Voter ethnicity in general elections

	latino	white	asian	black	other
2000	14%	71%	6%	7%	2%
1998	14	74	4	7	1
1996	12	76	4	6	2
1994	9	77	4	8	2
1992	8	79	4	7	2
1990	4	82	4	8	2

Source: Voter News Service, 1990, 1992, 1994, 1996, 1998, 2000.

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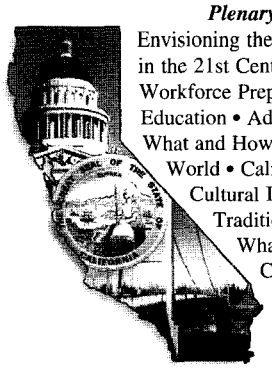

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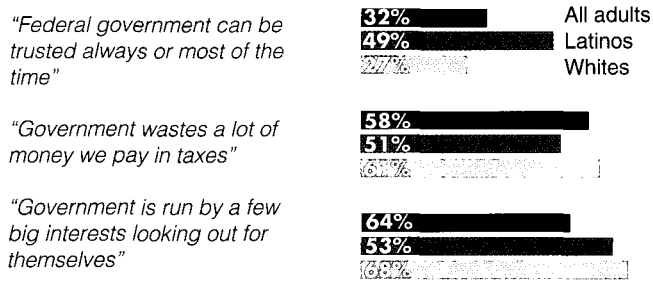
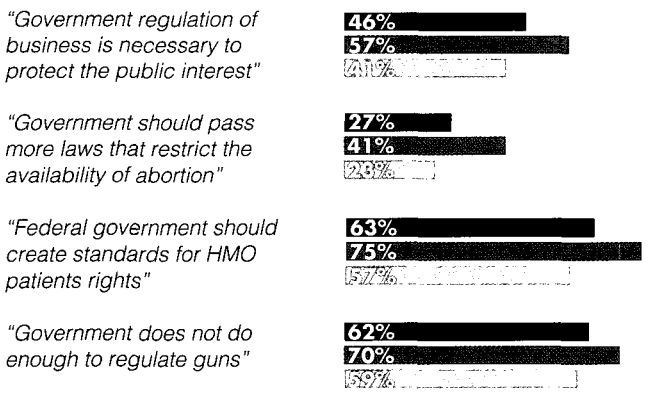
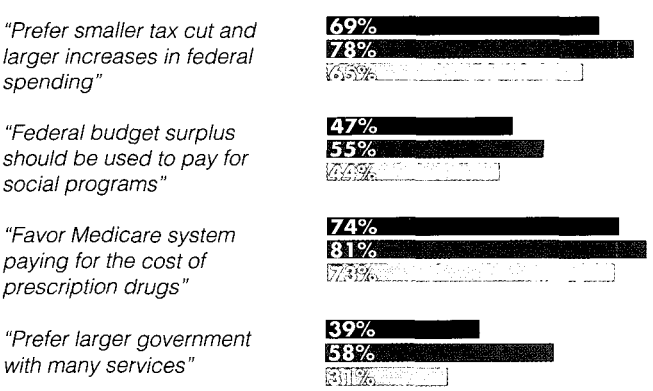
Latinos & government trust



Latinos & government regulations



Latinos & government spending



lot of the taxpayers' money, in contrast to half of the white respondents. About half of Latinos believed that the state government is run by big interests looking out for themselves, compared to six in 10 whites. Latinos were a little more likely than whites to have confidence that when the state government decides to solve a problem, the problem will be solved.

Positive attitudes toward government regulations

The fact that Latinos hold a more trusting view toward government and have a more favorable attitude about their elected officials would seem to have very important implications for the kinds of public policies they would prefer. This, in itself, could have major implications for public policy directions. Most Californians distrust government involvement and thus assume that less government is better. Most also view government officials as less than competent and, furthermore, don't want government intrusion in their personal lives. Latinos feel differently and have less of a problem with the notion of government playing a more active role in regulating economic, social, and even personal-choice interests. These differences were borne out in Latino attitudes towards government regulations during the 2000 elections.

Californians as a whole were generally ambivalent about government involvement in the private sector. They were about equally likely to say that "government regulation of business is necessary to protect the public interest" as to agree that "government regulation of business often does more harm than good." In fact, Americans in general were about evenly divided in their attitudes towards business regulations. This is not the case among Latinos in California, most of whom believed that government regulation of business is needed to protect the public interest. In this respect, Latinos were distinct from whites, most of whom feel that government regulation of business often does more harm than good.

The favorable attitudes Latinos had toward regulation of business extend to land use and development decisions. When asked to choose between two values — individual property rights and government regulation of development — Californians favored individual property rights by a large margin. Americans as a whole leaned even more heavily toward the idea that individuals should be able to do what they want with their own land. Latinos, however, were evenly divided on this issue — with nearly half saying it is more important for the government to regulate development for the common good. By contrast, whites in California leaned heavily toward the idea that individual rights have the top priority.

On another controversial issue, in this case involving government regulation of private activities, the overwhelming majority of state residents have long held "pro-choice" positions on abortion. In a January 2000 survey, only three in 10 residents wanted the government to pass more laws restricting abortion, while seven in 10 thought the government should not interfere with a woman's right to abortion. Latinos differed sharply from fellow Democrats on this issue of abortion regulations, with more of them than even Republicans holding "anti-abortion" positions. Four in 10 Latinos thought the government should pass more restrictive laws with regard to abortion, while fewer than one in four whites felt this way. One might argue that it was their socially conservative or religious and cultural background that influenced Latinos in their opinions about abortion. Nonetheless, their policy preferences on this issue reflect a certain willingness to allow the government to intervene in private decisions.

Most Californians have reached the point of fearing gun violence so much that they have for some time favored

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greater government restrictions on gun ownership. Their pro-gun control attitudes are in line with those expressed by Americans as a whole. Two in three Californians believe that "the government does not do enough to regulate access to guns," while just one in three residents feel that "the government goes too far in regulating access to guns." On this issue, Latinos are even more overwhelmingly in favor than whites of increasing government regulation of guns.

We also asked residents what they thought was more likely to reduce gun violence — better enforcement of existing laws or more laws and restrictions on obtaining guns. This provided another opportunity to identify preferences for more government regulations. A solid majority of Californians chose better enforcement, while only one in three preferred more laws. In fact, state residents were more likely than the nation as a whole to think that the answer lies in better enforcement of existing laws. Latinos were more divided on this issue and thus much more supportive than whites of having more laws and restrictions on guns.

Mark Baldassare is director of research at the Public Policy Institute of California in San Francisco. He also directs the PPIC Statewide Survey and holds the Arjay and Frances Fearing Miller Chair in Public Policy.

Latino support for more government involvement is also evident in their responses to the issue of health care reform. By a two-to-one margin, Californians agreed that the federal government ought to create standards to protect the rights of patients in HMOs and managed health care plans. Only one in three believed that such efforts would get the federal government too involved in health care. Californians are similar to most Americans in their desire for more government involvement in HMOs and managed care. While a solid majority of whites are in favor of more government regulations, Latinos are overwhelmingly supportive of this proposal for health care reform.

Preference for a larger government, more services

The unique orientation of Latinos toward spending by the federal government came into focus most sharply in a question we asked in the weeks before the November 2000 presidential election. When asked if they would prefer a smaller government with fewer services, or a larger government with many services, the majority of Californians preferred the former to the latter. Although whites preferred a smaller government providing fewer services by a two-to-one margin, six in 10 Latinos wanted a larger government with many services.

The inclination of Latinos to support increases for government spending at the federal level extends to state-level funding. After the 1998 gubernatorial elections, we asked Californians to rate four areas of the state budget — kindergarten through 12th grade, public colleges and universities, public health and welfare, and prisons and corrections — as high, medium, or low priorities for state spending. Residents overwhelmingly identified public schools as a high priority, and a majority said that higher education and health and welfare were very important; only one in four said that prisons and corrections should receive high priority in state spending. In all instances, Latinos were more likely than whites to rate state programs as high priorities for public spending. There were especially large differences with respect to higher education, health and welfare, and corrections and prisons, since very few Californians ranked K-12 schools as less than a high priority.

The greater desire for state government spending was also evident in future-oriented questions in the same post-election survey. We asked people how important it was for the state government to be spending public funds on various infrastructure needs now in preparation for future population growth. The programs included building schools, building roads and freeways, and building and expanding water storage facilities. Seven in 10 residents said it was very important to build schools, and half believed it was very important to build water systems and roads. In all three cases, Latinos were much more likely than whites to say that it was very important for the state to invest money in the infrastructure.

Latinos also expressed a greater interest in state spending on environmental programs than in receiving a tax cut. We asked Californians how they would like to see the state budget surplus allocated, after most of the funds are set aside for education and other state programs. A near majority of Californians said they would prefer a conservation trust fund to purchase lands for parks and open space, while almost as many said they wanted to use the remaining surplus to reduce their taxes. A slight majority of Latinos preferred that the state retain the funds for conservation programs, while just shy of a majority of whites supported this position.

In sum, Latinos are distinct in their strong and consistent preferences for government spending at the local, state and federal levels. Their liberal positions on fiscal issues stand in contrast to the state's white voters, who have been inclined to take a hard line against spending and tax increases since Proposition 13 passed in the late 1970s. As Latinos vote in larger numbers, they could tip the balance in local and statewide initiatives concerned with spending for government programs. Moreover, fiscally conservative candidates for statewide office will have to moderate some of their positions, since such attitudes do not reflect the spending preferences of Latino voters.

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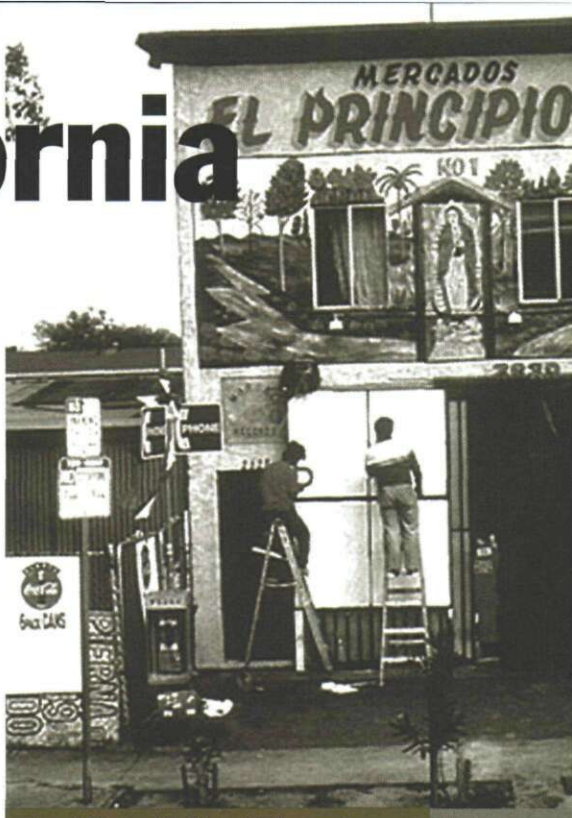
Blending California

Los Angeles is segregated and California is more diverse, says new study



Two of the top 10 cities with the most segregated neighborhoods in California — East Los Angeles and Newport Beach.

Los Angeles, America's modern melting pot, isn't melting.

Despite its diverse population, LA actually contains the most segregated neighborhoods of any major city in California. In fact, East Los Angeles, with its dominant Latino population, is the most ethnically segregated city in the state.

This striking new look at California's ongoing demographic change is from a recent study by a trio of researchers at the Public Policy Institute of California in San Francisco — Juan Onesimo Sandoval, Hans Johnson and Sonya Tafoya.

The team created a "diversity index," which assigned a value to each of the state's 7,049 census tracts based on the presence of four major ethnic groups — white, black, Latino and Asian. A score of 100 on the diversity index, for example, indicated that equal shares of the four ethnic groups were found in the census tract.

The tracts, with an average population of about 4,000 people each, were then divided into one of four categories — diverse, somewhat diverse, somewhat segregated and segregated.

Despite the segregation trend in Los Angeles, the study found a rapid blending of the state's population overall.

The number of census tracts with a diverse population nearly tripled during the 1990s. By 2000, almost a quarter of the state lived in diverse neighborhoods compared to just 8 percent in 1990. Conversely, 43 percent of California neighborhoods were segregated in 1990 compared to 25 percent in 2000.

Strikingly, almost half of the California neighborhoods that were segregated in 1990 were no longer so in 2000.

Whites still represent a majority in 52 percent of the state's census tracts, compared to 65 percent in 1990.

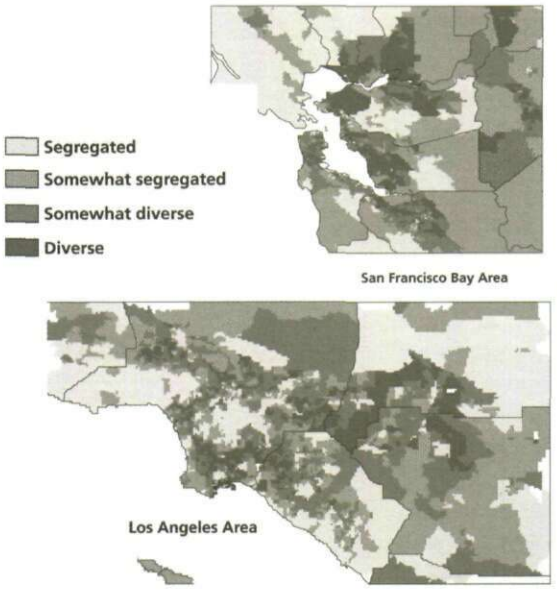
Meanwhile, blacks are the most likely racial group to live in a diverse neighborhood, according to the report. The only segregated black communities in California, however, are found in Los Angeles.

"Los Angeles is like many of California's large, older cities — the overall population is diverse, but the neighborhoods are not," said Sandoval. "With the notable exception of Sacramento, which is very diverse, we find that the younger, suburban cities ... have the greatest neighborhood diversity."

Indeed, nine of the 10 most diverse cities are suburbs of the state's largest metropolitan areas. Seven of them are in the Bay Area and two in Los Angeles.

Major metropolitan differences

Blending of the population in California's two major metropolitan areas is strikingly different. In the Bay Area, dark shades on the map reflect the dramatic increase in diversity everywhere except northern areas like Marin County. In Los Angeles, light colored patches, particularly in the city's urban core, identify segregated neighborhoods.



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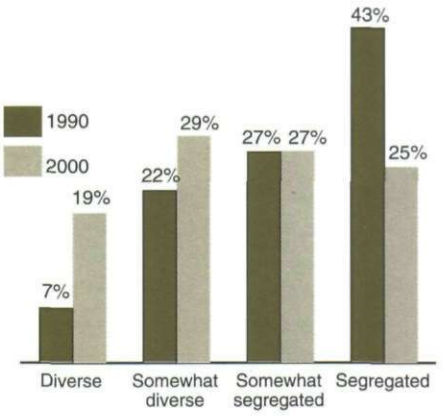
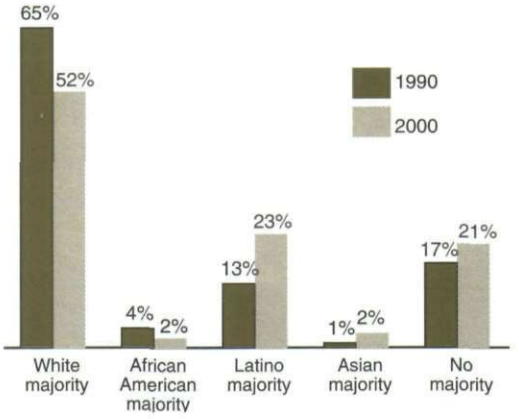
Increasing diversity

Percentage of neighborhoods in 1990 and 2000 categorized by diversity



Ethnic majorities

Barely half of California neighborhoods have a white majority today, down from about two-thirds in 1990.



Top 10 cities with the most diverse neighborhoods

The most segregated areas of California are its rural corners, which are mostly white, and urban cores like Los Angeles, which is mostly Latino. In contrast, ethnic diversity in California is common in most large cities and suburbs. Of California's 152 cities and unincorporated places with 50,000 or more people, only 18% experienced a decline in neighborhood diversity from 1990 to 2000.

Place	Diversity Index	Population
Vallejo	85	116,760
Pittsburg	85	56,769
Hayward	84	140,000
San Leandro	83	79,452
Fairfield	82	96,178
Sacramento	81	407,018
Bellflower	81	72,,878
Moreno Valley	80	142,381
Union City	80	66,869
Richmond	79	99,216

Top 10 cities with the most segregated neighborhoods

Place	Diversity Index	Population	Majority Group	% of Population
East Los Angeles	12	124,283	Latino	97%
Huntington Park	14	61,348	Latino	96%
South Gate	20	96,375	Latino	92%
Florence-Graham	27	60,197	Latino	86%
Pico Rivera	32	63,428	Latino	88%
Newport Beach	33	70,032	White	89-90%
Redding	34	80,865	White	86-88%
Lynwood	38	69,845	Latino	82%
Encinitas	39	58,014	White	79-81%
Montebello	41	62,150	Latino	75%

Public Policy Institute of California
Research conducted by Juan Onesimo Sandoval, Hans P. Johnson and Sonya M. Tafoya

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Rob McKay: Looking

Attorney Vigo "Chip" Nielsen was more than a little curious last fall when he heard that a wealthy San Francisco liberal wanted to hire him, a diehard Republican, to help craft an election reform measure to increase voter participation. And he thought: Rob McKay? Who's he?

"I thought looking him in the eye and figuring out who he is is very important," says Nielsen, who did so and was sufficiently impressed to take up the cause.

Many people now think it's important to take the measure of Robert McKay Jr., the latest multimillionaire to step onto the Golden State's political stage. McKay, the 38-year-old scion of a fast-food fortune, is the driving spirit and checkbook behind a November ballot measure, Proposition 52, which would enable Californians to register to vote on Election Day and also toughen penalties against voter fraud. One study of the practice, which already exists in six other states, estimates that Proposition 52 could increase voter turnout in California by as much as 9 percent.

He is the driving force behind Proposition 52, the November initiative that would allow voters to register on Election Day. But who is Rob McKay? Is he Al Checchi and Bill Simon redux — a big bank account strapped to an even bigger ego? And is his initiative a sincere effort to bring more voters into the booth or a vanity vehicle designed to introduce California to yet another rich kid with overactive political ambitions?

An early Field Poll showed the measure lagging 37 percent to 54 percent among likely voters, with Democrats split evenly and 70 percent of Republicans opposed. Republicans, as Nielsen puts it, "think it must be some sort of Democratic scheme because McKay is a Democrat, and we all know Democrats are sneaky." An undaunted McKay says he may put as much as $10 million into the campaign, a figure that could rival Bill Simon's self-financing in the governor's race.

So why is McKay doing this? He says he simply wants to make it easier for people to vote and thus to make democracy healthier and more representative. The dismal turnout in the March primary suggested that the post-September 11 expression of patriotism, for all the emotion and flag-waving, had no appreciable impact on voting habits. Nor did Florida's fiasco in the 2000 presidential election, which to many underlined the importance of individual votes.

"A lot of people have gotten cynical about whether their vote matters," McKay says. " People talk about [low voter turnout] as a problem, but I haven't seen anybody try to do anything about it. This is simply a

By Scott Harris

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for voters

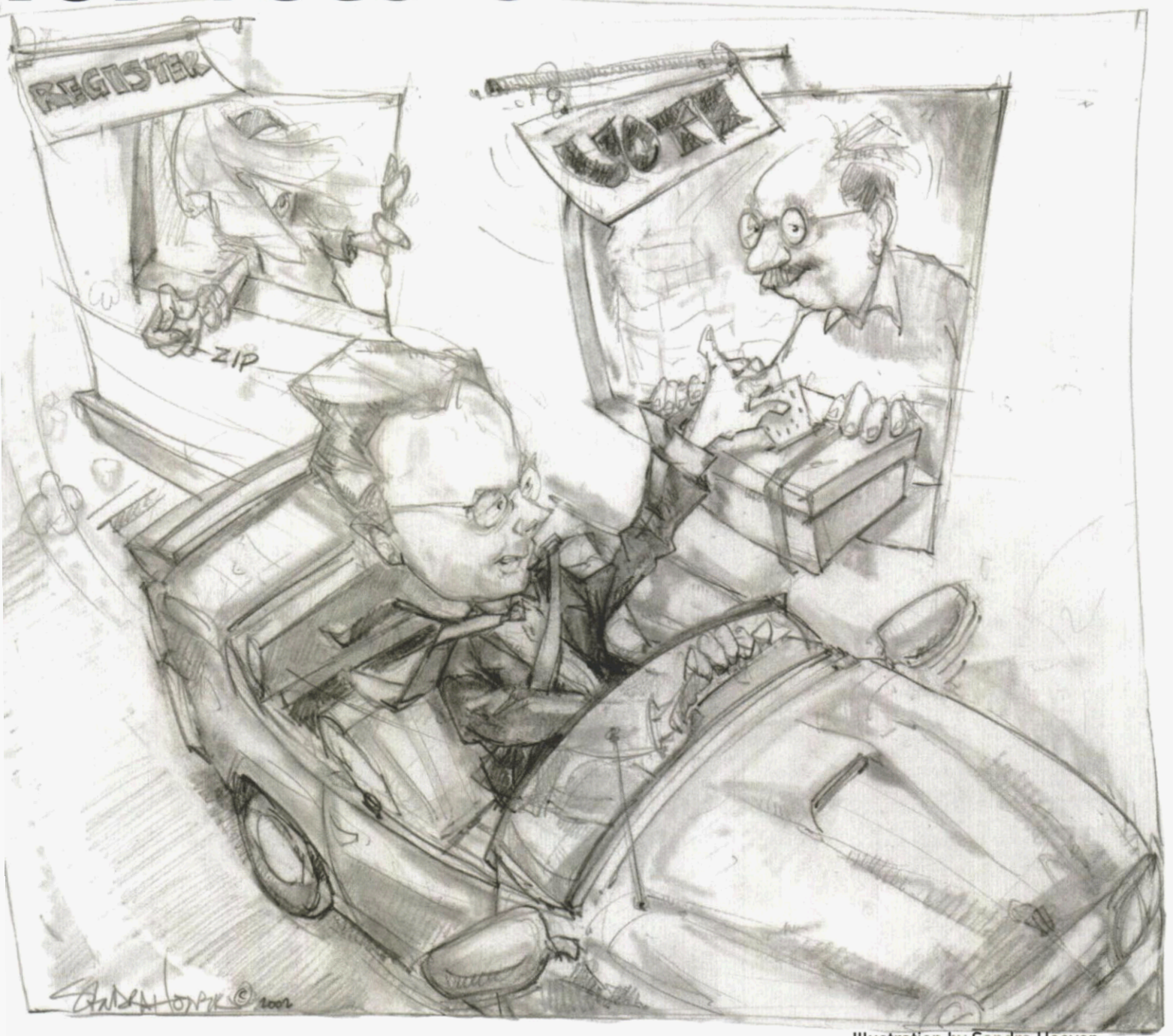

Illustration by Sandra Hoover

straightforward reform that goes to a fundamental core value of our country, which is democracy."

No Pollyana

Somehow McKay manages to say all this without sounding Pollyana-ish. He is a reasonably handsome man with smooth features, a medium build, thinning brown hair and the deep, resonant voice of a broadcaster. It's not always easy to catch up with McKay, who lives bi-coastally, spending one week each month in Manhattan, where his ex-wife and 3-year-old daughter live. The rest of the month is spent in San Francisco. Inside his office at the 11-year- old philanthropic McKay Foundation in downtown San Francisco, McKay comes across as serious but affable, idealistic

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though by no means naive.

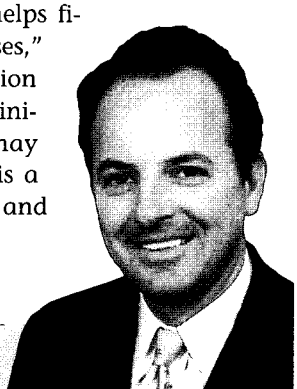
McKay understands that many will perceive him as "another rich white guy who put stuff on the California ballot," a conga line that includes such fellow initiative-backers as Arnold Schwarzenegger, Ron Unz, Tim Draper and Rob Reiner, and candidates Al Checchi, Michael Huffington, Dick Riordan and Simon. *The New York Times'* Maureen Dowd has had fun speculating about a 2006 gubernatorial showdown between Schwarzenegger and Reiner — Terminator vs. Meathead — but this Rob merits watching as well.

Is McKay interested in someday seeking office himself?

"I don't absolutely rule it out," he says. Although McKay has flown below the media radar until recently, the McKay Foundation has contributed to dozens of community-based social-justice groups that could serve a liberal candidate well. While keeping his options open, McKay emphasizes that the Proposition 52 campaign will focus on the issue and not serve as a vanity vehicle to introduce himself to California electorate.

From the start, however, the measure's opponents targeted McKay for some mild *ad hominem* arguments. Organized by Republican consultant Dave Gilliard behind the banner "Citizens and Law Enforcement Against Fraud," the group's litany of objections includes the assertion that Election Day registration is a fringe notion supported by the likes of Ralph Nader and Vermont Congressman Bernie Sanders, "the only avowed Socialist in the House of Representatives."

McKay himself says he "helps finance numerous left-wing causes," including a $100,000 contribution to San Francisco's "living-wage" initiative. Conservatives also may shudder to learn that McKay is a director of the Ms. Foundation and co-chair of the Foundation for National Progress, which funds *Mother Jones* magazine.



Rob McKay

- **Son of Robert McKay Sr., who built Taco Bell into a national chain before selling to Pepsico Inc. in 1978**
- **Managing partner, McKay Investment Group**
- **Established McKay Foundation, 1992**
- **B.A., political science, Occidental College**
- **Postgraduate degree, economics and nonprofit management, U.C. Berkeley**
- **Raised in Orange County; now residing in San Francisco**
- **Age 38, divorced, one daughter, age 3**

McKay laughs at the intimation that he must be some sort of pinko. While McKay indeed has a strong track record for supporting causes conventionally seen as liberal, he also has a reputation as a canny capitalist. One floor below the foundation is the McKay Investment Group, where McKay oversees a family fortune that he estimates as "a couple hundred million." This was parlayed from the $15 million Robert McKay Sr., the former chief executive officer of Taco Bell, received when Pepsico bought the chain in 1978. Early-stage investments in US Robotics and a Southern California bank paid handsomely, McKay says.

His father's son

McKay says he learned business at his father's knee. His younger brother John agrees: "Dad had the Midas touch, and Rob inherited some of that." John suggests that their mother, a devout Christian, may have been more influential in developing their moral sensibilities. In their early childhood, the McKay boys lived amid the privilege of Palos Verdes, but their mother insisted on putting them in a racially diverse Christian school in working-class Harbor City.

"We grew up aware of poverty," John says. The McKays later moved to the affluent hills of Orange County, where the boys attended Foothill High School. Rob was a distance runner and, according to his brother, so popular that he was noted for "Best Personality" in his senior yearbook. "He was extremely socially active, the one always engaging people."

The politically conservative parents and liberal sons often had "intense discussions and debates," says John. He runs a Christian-oriented charity in Southern California founded by his mother after she and her husband divorced in the mid-1990s. Rob dutifully attended Presbyterian services through high school, though now he considers himself "spiritual" but without a formal religious affiliation.

McKay says a turning point for him came during his undergraduate days at Occidental College in Los Angeles, when he joined student demonstrations urging American divestment from South Africa in protest of apartheid policies. Later, while embarking on a banking career in Chicago, McKay was drawn to the plight of the homeless and determined that his true passion would lie in philanthropy directed toward empowering communities to address social inequities — a value that his parents and brother share. He enrolled in graduate school at the University of California, Berkeley, and, in 1992, the McKay Foundation was launched.

Each family member, John says, brought a unique perspective but shared common values: "I'm a liberal Christian, Mom's a conservative Christian, Dad's a secular conservative and then wherever Rob fits in. Pretty much secular liberal. I know he gets annoyed with some of the labels, but that's certainly the best."

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"It seems to me the health of our democracy is something we ought to be discussing in 2002. "Why are people so alienated? So cynical?" — Rob McKay

The McKay Foundation was in its infancy when the Rodney King riots struck in 1992. "That focused our efforts," McKay recalls. A handful of Los Angeles groups were among the first grantees.

An unorthodox foundation report offers clues to Rob McKay's activist philosophy. "It's about POWER," the cover declares. Inside is a fiery quote from Frederick Douglass that memorably ends: "Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did, it never will." There are capsule descriptions of 36 community-based programs the McKay Foundation has funded, such as Los Angeles' Bus Riders Union, San Diego's Environmental Health Coalition and Silicon Valley's Working Partnerships USA. There is also an manifesto of sorts written by Rob McKay:

"Power. Not a comfortable concept in contemporary American society. Most people tend to think of it as a greedy and corrupting force, as some sort of zero-sum game that defines good and evil. At the McKay Foundation, however, we believe that power corrupts only when it is unchallenged. ...But the goal of the groups we fund is not merely to challenge existing authority; it is also to take power, to redistribute power in a legitimate and democratic fashion and to wield it for social justice. In short — to play the game fairly and win."

Reaching more voters

Proposition 52, to McKay, is an extension of these sentiments. Election Day voter registration, he argues, won't just help increase turnout but will improve political discourse because politicians and consultants will have to make their case to a wider and less predictable electorate. In Minnesota, one of six states that have Election Day registration, the process is credited for helping elect such diverse politicos as independent Governor Jesse Ventura and liberal Democratic U. S. Senator Paul Wellstone. Entrenched political interests of both parties, many of whom quietly prefer small voter turnouts, don't care for a new variable.

"The monkey wrench I like is that the political consultants don't like it," says McKay. Liberals, McKay says, fret that groups like the Christian Coalition could use Election Day registration to mobilize voters in a tight race. McKay says that's fine with him; the objective is a more engaged democracy with the votes falling where they may.

But the campaign faces a tough sell. Republican opposition is another big obstacle. Conventional wisdom holds that larger turnouts favor Democrats, and Election Day registration would appeal to a young, more liberal crowd — the last thing California's struggling Republican Party needs. Early on, only GOP mavericks such as Dick Riordan and former U.S. Representative Tom Campbell endorsed McKay's effort.

"It's because I'm a Republican that I'm for this initiative," declares Tom Stickel, a longtime GOP activist in San Diego and chairman of the California Chamber of Commerce. "This is something the Republican Party should enthusiastically embrace. This would prove we don't want to keep people away from the polls. If low turnout is so successful for us, why are we such a substantially minority party at the elected-office level?"

Opponents focus on the questions about fraud, raising the specter of unqualified persons swarming to contested precincts with bogus IDs. "I liken it to a burglary," says Assemblyman Ken Maddox, an Orange County Republican and co-chair of the anti-52 campaign. "It says we're going to increase the penalties for burglary, but we're going to make you leave the front door unlocked and open."

Chip Nielsen says such observations ignore the fact that most fraud in the existing system comes in the mail-in registration process. He says that he and Lance Olson, the campaign's Democratic co-counsel, studied electoral procedures across the state to develop the measure. Although it's tough to develop a fraud-proof system, Nielsen argues that the existing practice is far more vulnerable, with most of the dubious activity occurring by mail or in DMV offices with no ID required. Election Day voter registration would require a photo ID or certain pieces of mail (such as utility bill or mortgage statement) that is now accepted to cast provisional ballots. Moreover, Nielsen says, the doubling of penalties for voter fraud and the posting of legal warnings at polling places would serve as deterrents.

McKay is keenly aware that success or failure may ride on whether the campaign can address these fears. "There's no evidence in the six states [that have Election Day registration] of increased voter fraud," McKay says. "...On this I really take issue with our opponents. I would never support something that would diminish the public's trust in the integrity of the voting process."

Whatever the outcome, McKay says the measure will at least force Californians to consider vital questions. "It seems to me the health of our democracy is something we ought to be discussing in 2002," he says. "Why are people so alienated? So cynical?"

Scott Harris is freelance writer in the Bay Area. Comments on this article may be sent to **edit@statenet.com.**

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California missing

by Marc Sandalow

Could it really be that California's Central Valley is this important to Republicans?

The dog days of August find President George Bush, Vice President Dick Cheney, House Speaker Dennis Hastert and Republican Whip Tom Delay each planning a visit to Gary Condit's congressional district.

Never mind wilting 100-degree heat, new boundaries that stack the deck against GOP state Senator Dick Monteith or an internal poll conducted by Democratic Assemblyman Dennis Cardoza showing him ahead by 23 points.

Republicans readily admit that winning Gary Condit's seat is their only realistic shot at picking up ground in the Golden State.

Meanwhile, Democrats expect to grow their 32-to-20 seat advantage by just one, thanks to the new seat added after the 2000 census. In spite of its size and tradition for intrigue, California is expected to play only a bit part in the biggest drama of the 2002 election. The stakes for the state — and the nation — could hardly be larger. With both houses of Congress up for grabs, this election will determine the balance of power in Washington as the nation heads toward the first presidential contest since the split decision of 2000.

California is expected to play only a bit part in the biggest drama of the 2002 election.

Incumbents might tell themselves that the lack of competitive races in California reflects the complete and utter satisfaction of the state's voters with their representation. A better explanation is probably found in a strategic decision made by Democrats in the Legislature during redistricting. Calculating that their power is at a high-water mark, state Democrats rebuffed national party leaders and decided that rather than reach for more seats, they would reinforce existing districts to maintain their advantage for 10 more years.

As a result, incumbents are having an easy time, and the national parties are largely ignoring the West Coast as they look to places like Roswell, New Mexico, and Bangor, Maine, as the front lines in the battle for control of Congress.

A pickup of six seats for the Democrats would put the House back in their control for the first time since 1994. A net gain of one Senate seat for the GOP would give the president's party a majority.

The consequences are just as profound for the balance of power among California politicians. A Democratic takeover in the House could propel San Francisco Rep. Nancy Pelosi into the majority leader's role, a powerful post never before held by a Californian — or a woman.

And California Democrats in powerful positions when Newt Gingrich and company took control in 1994 would come roaring back. Rep. George Miller of Martinez would be in position to take over the education committee, Rep. Tom Lantos of San Mateo would chair international relations, and Los Angeles' Henry Waxman would be in charge of the government reform panel, putting him in a prime position to investigate, or at least pester, the Bush White House.

A Republican victory would solidify the position of Bakersfield's Bill Thomas, chair of Ways and Means, and Rules Chair David Dreier of San Dimas.

But whether a transition happens or not depends on the outcome of a series of close elections that will occur almost exclusively outside the state. Charlie Cook, one of Washington's pre-eminent congressional handicappers, figures that just 39 of the nation's 435 House races are competitive. Of those, only California's 18th — Condit's district — is up for grabs, and even that, Cook acknowledges, leans Democratic.

The small number of tight races will make it hard for Democrats to win a majority. Cook and other analysts agree that there are about two dozen seats which could go either way. For Democrats to win the majority, they will need to win nearly twice as many of the close ones. That's not impossible, but neither is it likely.

On the Senate side, anything is possible, though Democrats are defending just 14 open seats compared to 20 for the Republicans. The GOP spoke confidently about riding President Bush's popularity to election year gains before the falling stock market began to eat away at the president's popularity.

All of which leaves Californians, looking for a good congressional fight, no place but the Central Valley, with its reminders of last summer's tawdry obsession with Condit and the missing intern.

"We're going to win this race," said a top official at the House Republicans' election committee, offering to wager a steak dinner on the outcome. Meanwhile, Cardoza's staff says it is so confident that it has begun to reassign staffers to Assembly races that are seen as more closely contested.

— Contributing editor Marc Sandalow is the San Francisco Chronicle's *Washington Bureau chief. Comments may be emailed to* **edit@statenet.com**

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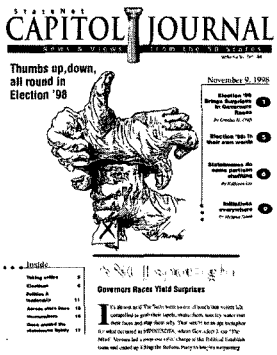

Capitol Journal is *the* publication about political life in the 50 states. Reported and written by the editors of the *California Journal,* it has the feel of a newsletter but the impact of a magazine. The weekly includes an overview of activity in all 50 states and provides hard hitting analysis of key issues and hot election races. The daily focuses on California by providing legislative floor session schedules, committee hearings, Capitol rallies, news conferences, client registrations among the lobbying corps and more. No one whose livelihood depends on events in the Capitol can be without this detailed, informative, and insightful publication. *Daily & weekly. FAX, Web or E-mail delivery. $480.*

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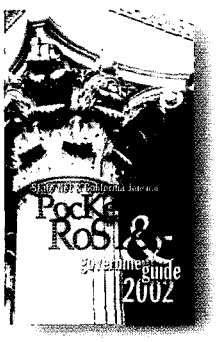

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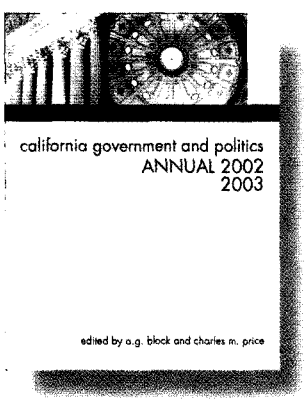

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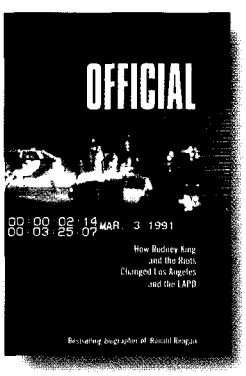
Official Negligence: *How the Rodney King Riots Changed Los Angeles and the LAPD*



The Rodney King beating, the trial and its terrible aftermath form the core of this exhaustive study by longtime Washington Post reporter and columnist. *Hard cover, Random House, 698 pages, $15.95. paper.*

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Cal-Am is part of American Water Works Company, Inc. (NYSE:AWK). American Water Works Company is the nation's largest publicly traded enterprise devoted exclusively to the water and wastewater business. Its 6,600 associates provide ongoing water resource management services to nearly 16 million people in 27 U.S. States and 3 Canadian provinces.

Cal-Am would like to opportunity to partner with your community. Please call us at 310.863.9440 to see if we can help with your water and wastewater needs.

A partner for all your community water needs.
Contract Services · Operations and Management · Asset Purchase

California-American Water Company

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Please visit us at Booth #305 at the 2002 League of California Cities Conference, October 3-4.